

H.R. 3246, A BILL TO EXEMPT POSTAL RETIREES WHO ARE REEMPLOYED AS RURAL LETTER CARRIERS OR RURAL POSTMASTERS FROM THE RULES PERTAINING TO REEMPLOYED ANNUITANTS

4. P 84/10: 103-33

R. 3246, A Bill to Exempt Postal...
RE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRD CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

MAY 12, 1994

Serial No. 103-33

Printed for the use of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

80-289

WASHINGTON : 1994

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Congressional Sales Office, Washington, DC 20402
ISBN 0-16-046074-3

H.R. 3246, A BILL TO EXEMPT POSTAL RETIREES WHO ARE REEMPLOYED AS RURAL LETTER CARRIERS OR RURAL POSTMASTERS FROM THE RULES PERTAINING TO REEMPLOYED ANNUITANTS

4. P 84/10:103-33

RING

R. 3246, A Bill to Exempt Postal...

RE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRD CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

MAY 12, 1994

Serial No. 103-33

Printed for the use of the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1994

80-289

WASHINGTON : 1994

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Congressional Sales Office, Washington, DC 20402
ISBN 0-16-046074-3

COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE

WILLIAM L. CLAY, Missouri, *Chairman*

PATRICIA SCHROEDER, Colorado
FRANK McCLOSKEY, Indiana
GARY L. ACKERMAN, New York
THOMAS C. SAWYER, Ohio
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, Pennsylvania
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, District of Columbia
BARBARA-ROSE COLLINS, Michigan
LESLIE L. BYRNE, Virginia
MELVIN L. WATT, North Carolina
ALBERT RUSSELL WYNN, Maryland
GREG LAUGHLIN, Texas
SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR., Georgia
SHERROD BROWN, Ohio
ALCEE L. HASTINGS, Florida

JOHN T. MYERS, Indiana
BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, New York
DON YOUNG, Alaska
DAN BURTON, Indiana
CONSTANCE A. MORELLA, Maryland
THOMAS J. RIDGE, Pennsylvania
THOMAS E. PETRI, Wisconsin
SHERWOOD L. BOEHLERT, New York
(Vacancy)

GAIL E. WEISS, *Staff Director*
ROBERT E. LOCKHART, *General Counsel*
DORIS MOORE-GLENN, *Deputy Staff Director*
JOSEPH A. FISHER, *Minority Staff Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, District of Columbia, *Chair*

GARY L. ACKERMAN, New York
LESLIE L. BYRNE, Virginia

CONSTANCE A. MORELLA, Maryland
DON YOUNG, Alaska

CEDRIC HENDRICKS, *Subcommittee Staff Director*

(II)

CONTENTS

MAY 12, 1994

	Page
Hearing held in Washington, DC, May 12, 1994	1
Statement of:	
Henry, Suzanne J., Vice President of Government Relations, U.S. Postal Service	13
Klein, Leonard R., Associate Director, Career Entry Group, Office of Personnel Management	2
Olvera, Armando, president, National League of Postmasters, accompanied by Penny Dimler, director of government relations; William R. Brown, Jr., president, National Rural Letter Carriers' Association; Teena Cregan, director of government relations, National Association of Postmasters of the United States, accompanied by Kenneth H. Vlietstra, executive director, National Association of Postmasters of the United States	24
Sawyer, Hon. Thomas C., a Representative in Congress from the State of Ohio	4
Prepared statements, letters, supplemental materials, et cetera:	
Brown, William R., Jr., president, National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, prepared statement of	69
Games, David, president, National Association of Postmasters of the United States, prepared statement of	71
Henry, Suzanne J., Vice President of Government Relations, U.S. Postal Service, prepared statement of	15
Klein, Leonard R., Associate Director, Career Entry Group, Office of Personnel Management, prepared statement of	3
Norton, Hon. Eleanor Holmes, a Representative in Congress from the District of Columbia, prepared statement of	2
Olvera, Armando, president, National League of Postmasters, prepared statement of	31
Sawyer, Hon. Thomas C., a Representative in Congress from the State of Ohio, prepared statement of	5

(III)

H.R. 3246, A BILL TO EXEMPT POSTAL RETIREES WHO ARE REEMPLOYED AS RURAL LETTER CARRIERS OR RURAL POST-MASTERS FROM THE RULES PERTAINING TO REEMPLOYED ANNUITANTS

THURSDAY, MAY 12, 1994

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE,

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS,

Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2 p.m., in room 304, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton (chair of the subcommittee) presiding.

Member present: Representative Norton.

Members also present: Representatives Sawyer and Myers.

Ms. NORTON. The hearing will come to order.

Today we hold a hearing on H.R. 3246, a bill to exempt postal retirees who are reemployed as rural letter carriers or rural postmasters from the rules pertaining to reemployed annuitants. This bill was introduced by Congressman Tom Sawyer, chair of the Subcommittee on Census, Statistics and Postal Personnel, and a distinguished member of this committee. I am particularly pleased to welcome our colleague, Congressman Sawyer, who will testify on behalf of his legislation.

Under current law, when Federal retirees are reemployed by the Federal Government, their salaries are offset by the amount of their annuity payments. Reemployed annuitants continue to receive their monthly annuity payments. The reemploying agency then pays the retiree the amount of salary in excess of the amount of the annuity, and reimburses the Federal Retirement Trust Fund with the amount of the annuity. If an agency, however, wishes an exemption from these rules, it may request a waiver from the Office of Personnel Management.

H.R. 3246 would permit postal retirees who are reemployed as rural letter carriers or rural postmasters to receive full salary in addition to any annuity the retiree already receives, without first requesting a waiver from OPM. Currently, the Postal Service does not have the option to request such a waiver from OPM.

Today, in addition to Congressman Sawyer, we will hear from the OPM, the USPS, and organizations representing the rural letter carriers and rural postmasters. The hearing will focus on the justification for extending this exceptional waiver authority to the Postal Service without requiring it to seek approval from OPM. In

addition, we will examine the possibility of adding the Postal Service to the list of agencies that can request a waiver from OPM.

I welcome all of today's witnesses and look forward to your testimony.

Now, until Chairman Sawyer comes, I am going to ask Mr. Leonard R. Klein of the OPM, Associate Director for Career Entry Group, and Suzanne J. Henry, U.S. Postal Service, Vice President of Government Relations—oh, I am sorry, it is listed here. I thought you were on the same panel. I am told you are not. Ms. Henry, if you would suspend a moment and I will hear from Mr. Klein.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Today we hold a hearing on H.R. 3246, a bill to exempt postal retirees who are reemployed as rural letter carriers or rural postmasters from the rules pertaining to reemployment annuitants. This bill was introduced by Congressman Tom Sawyer, Chair of the Subcommittee on Census, Statistics, and Postal Personnel, and a distinguished member of this Committee. I am particularly pleased to welcome our colleague Congressman Sawyer who is here to testify on behalf of his legislation.

Under current law, when federal retirees are reemployed by the federal government, their salaries are offset by the amount of their annuity payments. Reemployed annuitants continue to receive their monthly annuity payments. The employing agency then pays the retiree the amount of salary in excess of the amount of the annuity, and reimburses the Federal Retirement Trust Fund with the amount of the annuity. If an agency, however, wishes to have an exemption from these rules, it may request a waiver from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

H.R. 3246 would permit postal retirees who are reemployed as rural letter carriers or rural postmasters to receive full salary in addition to any annuity the retiree already receives, without first requesting a waiver from OPM. Currently, the Postal Service does not have the option to request such a waiver from OPM.

Today, in addition to Congressman Sawyer, we will hear from the U.S. Postal Service, and organizations representing rural letter carriers and rural postmasters. The hearing will focus on the justification for extending this exceptional waiver authority to the Postal Service without requiring it to seek approval from OPM. In addition, we will examine the possibility of adding the Postal Service to the list of agencies that can request a waiver from OPM.

I welcome all of today's witnesses and I look forward to hearing your testimony.

STATEMENT OF LEONARD R. KLEIN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CAREER ENTRY GROUP, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

We thank you for the opportunity to present the Office of Personnel Management's views on H.R. 3246. This bill would allow the U.S. Postal Service to reemploy postal annuitants as rural letter carriers or rural postmasters at full salary. OPM opposes enactment of H.R. 3246.

Under the Civil Service Retirement System, as you pointed out, and the Federal Employees' Retirement System, annuitants who are reemployed by Federal agencies must have their pay reduced by the amount of their annuity attributable to the period of reemployment, and can have their annuity increased based on the additional service. This provision for the offset of pay reflects an important principle—that a Federal employee who retires with an annuity and is later reemployed by the Federal Government, should not

be able to draw the annuity and a full salary. Because the Government's retirement systems permit retirement at a relatively young age, the lack of such an offset provision would result in substantial numbers of employees retiring at first opportunity with the expectation of immediately returning to work and drawing both annuity and full salary.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Klein follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LEONARD R. KLEIN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CAREER ENTRY GROUP, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Madam Chair and members of the subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present the Office of Personnel Management's views on H.R. 3246. This bill would allow the U.S. Postal Service to reemploy postal annuitants as rural letter carriers or rural postmasters, at full salary. OPM opposes enactment of H.R. 3246.

Under the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees' Retirement System, annuitants who are reemployed by Federal agencies must have their pay reduced by the amount of their annuity attributable to the period of reemployment, and can have their annuity increased based on the additional service. This provision for the offset pay reflects an important principle—that a Federal employee, who retires with an annuity and is later reemployed by the Federal Government, should not be able to draw both the annuity and a full salary. Because the Government's retirement systems permit retirement at relatively young ages, the lack of such an offset provision could result in substantial numbers of employees retiring at first opportunity with the expectation of immediately returning to work and drawing full annuity and full salary as well. This would be very costly to the retirement systems.

However, the current law does recognize the need to make exceptions from the reemployment annuitant provision in unusual circumstances. Under both the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees' Retirement System, OPM has authority to waive offset provision, at the request of an agency head, on a case-by-case basis for employees in jobs for which there is exceptional difficulty in recruiting or retaining a qualified employee. In addition, OPM can delegate this waiver authority to the head of an agency on a temporary basis, as needed to deal with an emergency situation involving a direct threat to life or property.

We believe that the current waiver authority provides an appropriate means to grant limited exceptions from the offset provision, and that separate, statutory waivers for rural letter carriers or other groups of employees are not proper or desirable. H.R. 3246 would establish preferential treatment for a particular group of employees, and set a precedent for extending similar treatment to additional groups of employees, to the detriment of equity and proper administration. We also note that this bill would violate the pay-as-you-go requirements of the Budget Enforcement Act by reducing on-budget receipts. Accordingly, OPM opposes enactment of H.R. 3246.

Thank you. I would be pleased to answer any questions the subcommittee may have.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Klein, I am going to ask you to suspend, as I mentioned I would prior to our starting the hearing, as soon as Mr. Sawyer arrived. As he has now arrived, I would ask Mr. Sawyer if he would come forward at this time. We proceeded knowing that you were voting and agreed that when you came, we would ask you to come forward as our first witness, as had already been planned.

Mr. SAWYER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I apologize for being late. I hope that everyone understood exactly what was going on.

Ms. NORTON. I was able to begin only because I cannot vote on final passage.

Mr. SAWYER. Of course, I did not even think of it.

Ms. NORTON. I am very pleased to welcome the primary sponsor of this bill and my distinguished colleague, Mr. Tom Sawyer, who

has contributed so much to this committee, and who is the best authority on this bill, his own. Mr. Sawyer.

STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS C. SAWYER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OHIO

Mr. SAWYER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I have a statement that I have submitted for the record. I will try and touch on most of the points but summarizing in part.

The measure before us is designed to help the Postal Service meet personnel needs in remote areas. They have identified a need to hire on a temporary basis. They have had trouble attracting employees on a temporary basis to fill in where the regular postmaster or rural letter carrier is absent from work. The real problem is there are far fewer people to draw among in rural areas than there are in larger metropolitan communities, and so have greater difficulty in hiring trained temporary employees for extended periods of time.

This is particularly true in rural areas when employees are sick, on vacation, on detail, or otherwise off for work. There are just not trained people who are familiar with the routes and who understand customer needs to take their place.

The other problem is that temporary employees in rural areas might stay in their position for only a short period of time. They are more likely to accept a temporary position only until they find permanent employment. And with a high turnover rate among temporary employees in some rural areas, that does not promote efficient service.

The Service's primary goal is to move the mail in a timely and efficient manner. When a thin cadre of carriers or postmasters are not scheduled to work, the Service still has to continue to meet the needs of the customers. The purpose of the bill is to assist the Postal Service to meet those temporary needs by making postal employment attractive to retired postal employees. These folks are likely to have the free time, are willing to work part-time, understand the importance of serving the customer and, perhaps most importantly, they are familiar with postal procedures.

The provisions of title V all but prevent retirees from filling a temporary position. When reemployed, annuitants must forfeit an amount virtually equal to their annuity, removing any motivation except perhaps love of service to undertake that kind of work. This measure provides an exemption from the offset that in certain temporary positions and would apply only to retirees who are hired temporarily as rural postmasters or rural letter carriers.

Annuitants could be reemployed for 90 days in a calendar year without the offset and also would be limited to a 180-day lifetime cap on eligibility for this exemption. The time limit is to ensure we do not take away opportunities from those who seek career appointments with the Postal Service.

There is no cost to the American taxpayer. Operational costs are borne solely by the agency because it is off-budget. It does not require the Postal Service to hire its retirees. It does give the agency the flexibility to do so and to call on a pool of trained individuals when no one else is available on that kind of temporary basis.

I know some people are concerned about the wholesale elimination of the dual compensation prohibition, and I share that concern. It is clearly not my intention. But I think that any exemptions to the law undertaken in this statutory way have to be justified on a case-by-case basis. I think the situation we are addressing here is unique and that it provides a practical, and I hope thoughtful solution to a real problem.

In any case, I thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman, for holding this hearing. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Congressman Sawyer.

[The statement of Hon. Thomas C. Sawyer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS C. SAWYER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OHIO

Thank you, Madam Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this hearing to review H.R. 3246, a bill that will help the United States Postal Service meet temporary personnel needs in rural areas.

The Postal Service has identified a need to hire individuals on a temporary basis. This is particularly true in rural areas. In some rural communities, the Postal Service often has trouble attracting temporary employees to fill in when the regular postmaster or rural letter carrier is absent from work.

There are far fewer postal employees working in rural areas than in larger metropolitan communities. Therefore, those areas have greater difficulty hiring trained temporary employees for extended periods of time. When career postal employees in rural areas are sick, on vacation, on detail, or otherwise off from work, there often aren't trained employees who are familiar with the routes and who understand customer needs to take their place temporarily.

A related concern is that temporary employees in rural areas might stay in their position for only a short period of time. They are more likely to accept a temporary position only until they find permanent employment. Clearly, a high turnover rate among temporary postal employees in some rural areas does not promote efficient service.

The Postal Service's primary goal is to move the mail in a timely and efficient manner. Even when a rural postmaster or rural letter carrier is not scheduled to work, the Postal Service must continue to meet the needs of its customers.

The purpose of H.R. 3246 is to assist the Postal Service in meeting temporary personnel needs by making postal employment attractive to retired postal employees. These retirees are likely to have free time, to be willing to work part-time, and to understand the importance of serving the customer. Equally important, they are familiar with postal procedures and regulations.

Provisions of title 5, United States Code, relating to reemployed federal annuitants, all but prevent postal retirees from considering temporary reemployment with the Postal Service. Relevant sections of the law provide that reemployed postal annuitants must forfeit an amount equal to their annuity if they become reemployed by the agency.

H.R. 3246 provides for an exemption from the offset provisions contained in title 5, for retired postal employees who become reemployed by the Postal Service in certain temporary positions. The exemption would only apply to retirees who are hired temporarily as rural postmasters or rural letter carriers.

Under the bill, postal annuitants could be reemployed by the Postal Service for 90-days in calendar year without having their annuity offset by the amount of their pay. The measure also contains a 180 day lifetime limit on eligibility for this exemption. Time limits were included in the bill to ensure that postal retirees do not take away opportunities from individuals seeking career appointments with the Postal Service.

There is no cost to the American taxpayer associated with this legislation. Operational costs incurred by the Postal Service are borne solely by the agency because it is off-budget. The bill does not require the Postal Service to hire its retirees. It simply gives the agency flexibility to turn to a pool of trained and experienced individuals when no one else is available to fill a position temporarily in a rural area.

Finally, I know that some people are concerned that this legislation will open the door to a wholesale elimination of the dual compensation prohibition. That outcome clearly is not my intention. Rather, I think that any exceptions to the law governing reemployed annuitants must be justified on a case-by-case basis. I believed that the

situation we are addressing through H.R. 3246 is unique and that allowing the temporary reemployment of postal retirees is the only practical solution.

Thank you, Madam Chairman. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Klein had begun to testify, and as I understand his testimony, his concern about the bill is that the Government allows employees to retire at a relatively young age and that the lack of an offset provision could have the effect of virtually encouraging people to retire on the theory that they might well be called back.

He appears to suggest that OPM has the authority to waive the offset provision at the request of an agency head on a case-by-case basis for employees in jobs for which there is exceptional difficulty in recruiting or retaining a qualified employee.

Would you believe that authority might solve the problem you have discovered?

Mr. SAWYER. Well, first of all, I am not sure that a case-by-case waiver makes sense in dealing with a problem that is by nature as diffuse as rural postal delivery and management problems are.

Case by case might make sense in areas that are more compacted, but we are talking about the wilds of Montana, Idaho, and southern Ohio. Places all across the United States where dealing with a case-by-case basis on an almost day-by-day basis is probably not practical. In fact, I suspect it would be an administrative nightmare.

As far as encouraging people to retire early, my hope has been that a 90-day cap would certainly not stand in lieu of full-time employment. And a 180-day lifetime limit really offers an opportunity but nothing that the Postal Service would be required to undertake.

Ms. NORTON. Now, when you are talking about the 90-day cap, are you referring to delegation of the waiver authority to the head of the agency on a temporary basis as needed?

Mr. SAWYER. No. I am talking about the limits that would be built into the bill that would provide a hard protection against the kind of fear that you have. Whereas if it is on a case-by-case basis, the fact is there would not be any necessary limits at all. In that instance, the kind of fear that you have heard described, in fact, might become reality. I do not think it is likely. The real problem with the case-by-case waiver is that the problem occurs in such unexpected ways, in such broad-based areas across the country, that trying to administer a waiver on a case-by-case basis would be extremely difficult.

It would not provide the protections that the bill provides, while the bill provides the flexibility to deal with problems as they arise.

Ms. NORTON. OPM apparently suggests that they can delegate the waiver authority to the agency head on a temporary basis as needed to deal with an emergency situation involving a direct threat to life or property. Would that help?

Mr. SAWYER. I am not sure that that is the case. We are not talking about an anticipatable crisis. We are talking about events in the lives of individuals who may become sick, go on vacation, or simply not be able to address the kinds of problems that occur in the daily management of large complex systems.

Three-quarters of a million employees scattered across the United States who go on vacation, get sick, have to take care of relatives, or otherwise need to be absent from work. We are talking about the ability to fill in in areas that are so remote that it is difficult to find other people who have the kind of experience and background that retired postal annuitants might have.

We are not talking about providing so much opportunity that it would create an incentive to retire early. The chance to take advantage of it is unpredictable, as unpredictable as the events of people's individual lives.

Ms. NORTON. But they argue that the person retires knowing that it will be hard to replace that person and they can come back with full—that is the OPM argument—that they can predict when they retire that there is not somebody out there waiting to step in as postmaster.

Mr. SAWYER. Fill the position. That is my response, really. Fill the position. Do it responsibly. Give people the chance to move up through the anticipated career ladders. But where there are people absent from work, let us not simply ignore skilled, trained people who are out there and capable of doing the work but really cannot be expected to come and step back in out of love of covering a postal route.

This kind of exemption is, if not unique, so narrow as not to provoke the kinds of fears that are generic to the dual compensation protections.

Ms. NORTON. Is there any similarity to the bill you introduced in 1989 that waived the offset rule during the census because it was hard to find people to work as census workers? Is there a comparison here?

Mr. SAWYER. Well, there is a rough comparison, but my real concern is that the analogy not be made greater than it is. There clearly, in 1989, was the ability to anticipate large-scale difficulty in certain kinds of areas of the country in filling the requirements of census enumerators. There were problems of compensation and training to name a few.

But they were anticipatable. And so in introducing that one-time exemption we were able to respond to those specific difficulties. This is, in fact, almost the mirror image. This is a diffuse waiver that would not be a one-time basis but rather an ongoing thing. It would be limited in terms of the applicability to any individual because these are the kinds of problems that occur in real life day in and day out across the country. But the 90-day annual limit and the 180-day lifetime limit would assure that people not derive a second reliable income from it and thereby provoke early retirement.

Ms. NORTON. CBO estimates the bill will increase direct spending by less than half a million dollars over 5 years. To the extent pay-as-you-go rules apply, do you have any recommendations regarding that amount? It does not look like a lot.

Mr. SAWYER. First of all, I think it is what terms like insignificant were coined for. It is tempting to suggest that we could deduct the amount from the 29 million a year we owe Postal Service for revenue foregone. But the truth of the matter is that these are not dollars that are being paid out. Rather, if there is any money at

all, this is a windfall that would not be realized by the retirement systems if they were able to avoid paying people their retirement who came back on to the payroll on a temporary basis. But that is a windfall. That is not an additional expenditure.

Is it significant? No. Is this money that if this bill is not passed that they will be able to avoid? No. They will pay those dollars, simply and clearly, because it is their obligation to pay those dollars.

If the law remains in place and if people were to come back and work on a temporary basis in order to help out, then perhaps as much as \$500 million might be avoided in pension payments, but my view is that that just simply is not—

Ms. NORTON. As much as \$500,000?

Mr. SAWYER. Yes, \$500,000.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Sawyer. I hope you will be able to come and sit as we do the rest of the hearing.

Mr. SAWYER. Thank you. I would be pleased to do that. Thank you for the chance to be with you today.

Ms. NORTON. We can resume with Mr. Klein. If you would, Mr. Klein.

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you. I believe I left off at the point that, because the Government's retirement systems permit retirement at early ages, the lack of such an offset provision would result in substantial numbers of employees retiring at the first opportunity with the expectation of immediately returning to work and drawing full annuity and full salary as well. In general, it was a bad signal to give to civil servants that they may retire and immediately come back with full annuity and full salary.

Ms. NORTON. It is a bad signal to the civil servants who do not have it. It sends a good signal to the group, to the designated group.

Mr. KLEIN. That is correct.

Ms. NORTON. I am sorry, go ahead. I didn't mean to interrupt.

Mr. KLEIN. Current law does recognize the need to make exceptions from the reemployed annuitant provision in unusual circumstances. Under both the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees' Retirement System, OPM has the authority to waive the offset provision at the request of an executive agency head on a case-by-case basis for employees in jobs for which there is an exceptional difficulty in recruiting or retaining qualified employees. In addition, OPM can delegate this waiver authority to the head of an executive agency on a temporary basis, as needed to deal with emergency situations involving a direct threat to life or property or other unusual circumstances.

We believe the current waiver authority provides an appropriate means to grant limited exceptions from the offset provision, and that separate, statutory waivers for rural letter carriers or other groups of employees are not proper or desirable.

H.R. 3246 would establish preferential treatment for a particular group of employees, and set a precedent for extending similar treatment to additional groups of employees, to the detriment of equity and proper administration.

We have been informed by OMB also that this bill would violate the pay-as-you-go requirements of the Budget Enforcement Act by

reducing on-budget receipts. Accordingly, OPM opposes enactment of H.R. 3246.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I would be pleased to answer questions.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Sawyer has to go vote, I would like to ask him if he has any questions before he goes.

Mr. SAWYER. Let me just ask, the kind of waiver that you describe certainly fits the circumstance that you suggest it is appropriate to. Extraordinary danger, risk to life and property. What we are talking about here is really not that kind of circumstance at all. We are talking about the failure to deliver the mail, inability to maintain the day in and day out mandate of the agency.

What kind of supporting documentation do you think would be appropriate in trying to get delivery of a timely and appropriate waiver in these kinds of circumstances that are as diffuse and recurring as the kind that we are talking about here?

Mr. KLEIN. Assuming we could solve the pay-go problem, that is another issue we can discuss, but assuming we did that, and if the Postal Service were brought under OPM's waiver authority, we could provide waivers if there is a severe recruitment problem, I think that describes your situation, finding someone who can handle that rural delivery area and know the area.

Our authority is on a case-by-case basis. However, we could interpret case-by-case to mean situation by situation. If we were to work with the Post Service and develop a rather tight definition of what we are talking about here and approve in advance those kinds of situations, then we could possibly delegate to the Post Service the approval of individuals, which would eliminate the time problem.

Mr. SAWYER. I appreciate what the gentleman is saying, if in fact the kind of difficulty that we are describing and trying to address here were the kind that would be anticipatable, justifiable, and in terms in which the waiver was provided for.

It does not seem to me that the kind of diffuse, generic difficulty in recruitment in any given circumstance, where we are dealing with unanticipatable temporary illness, vacation time, the simple inability to bring people to work in a specific situation is met by the need to justify waivers in the terms that you described.

By the same token, the kind of fears that you express, in terms of the problems of creating a disincentive to appropriate patterns of retirement is at all protected by the kind of waiver you are talking about, except insofar as they might be removed on an individual case-by-case basis. And that might even be possible, except for the fact that we are dealing with an agency of 750,000 people spread all across this country.

Mr. KLEIN. I understand.

Mr. SAWYER. I am not sure the case-by-case analysis and waiver granting makes any sense.

Mr. KLEIN. Well, we have made exceptions for the Department of Defense, for example, for base closures, and they have all kinds of situations on those bases. They need to retain various kinds of people to have the capability to keep that base operating until it closes. There are cases where there are hurricanes or floods or

other situations that are very diffuse and we have been able to handle those with some generic—

Mr. SAWYER. The truth is they are not diffuse. Those are specific in time and place and they are anticipatable and they represent the kind of threat that the waiver was designed for. It seems to me that the kind of problem that you seek to propose to apply the waiver to is of a very different nature.

Madam Chair, I have to go vote, I apologize. I don't mean to be argumentative and I appreciate the kinds of concerns that the gentleman has raised. I am just not sure they are specific to the kinds of circumstances we are trying to address. In any case, I will come back as soon as I can. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Sawyer suggests that it does not fit. I wonder if you would be stretching your own regulations and in violation of them if you tried to make it fit this situation. I mean, that seems to me to be an even more serious concern. If you say we will take these rules and make them fit any situation that comes forward, you may have a worse problem.

Mr. KLEIN. If we could, for example, describe the kinds of situations Mr. Sawyer described in his statement, leave problems, emergency leave and getting someone to either run a post office or deliver the mail, I think we could fairly easily define those types of situations wherever they are with the post office, and assuming they met the criteria—

Ms. NORTON. Excuse me, I am sorry, Mr. Klein, what are the exact words? For temporary employment that is necessary due to an emergency involving a direct threat to life or property or other unusual circumstance? And then and on a case-by-case basis for employees in positions in which there is exceptional difficulty in recruiting or retaining qualified employees?

Mr. KLEIN. Yes, we have an unusual circumstance here and we also have a recruiting problem, definitely. It has been described as a recruiting problem.

I think the crux here is, do we define case-by-case as individual-by-individual or as generic case by generic case.

Ms. NORTON. Well, case-by-case—this case-by-case, does that refer to the day relief is needed?

Mr. KLEIN. It is not defined that tightly.

Ms. NORTON. What does case-by-case mean?

Mr. KLEIN. In the past, it has been a situation where they need a nuclear scientist to fill a position and they cannot find someone who has that kind of capability. Or it has been an emergency. Or, as I mentioned, a base closure, where we have to provide a broad range of people that are needed to close the base down. So I think we have enough flexibility there to cover this, assuming the pay-go issues are resolved.

Ms. NORTON. Section B of this bill has limitations, 90 days of service in any calendar year.

Mr. KLEIN. Yes.

Ms. NORTON. For a total of 180 days of service.

Mr. KLEIN. For the lifetime of that employee, I believe.

Ms. NORTON. Now, why is that not a sufficient safeguard to ward off the problems you cite?

Mr. KLEIN. I think our concern is more a general one that we will send the signal that there are other groups of employees who past legislation exempts from this coverage, and as long as we have a system that we think works and can provide some oversight, we think it is to the taxpayers' advantage to do that.

In fact, the current approach would, in my belief, be better for the Postal Service. The proposed bill only covers letter carriers and postmasters. We have had a request from the Postal Service for an engineer who is an ex-military officer. Under the approach in current law, we could cover that situation. Under the proposed bill here, we could not. So it would allow the Postal Service to consider other situations, assuming again the pay-go issue is not a problem. I think this approach has more flexibility.

Ms. NORTON. Is a census enumerator the only statutory exception?

Mr. KLEIN. I am not sure.

Ms. NORTON. The census enumerators that Mr. Sawyer got through for the census, is that the only statutory exemption?

Mr. KLEIN. As far as I am aware, yes.

Ms. NORTON. Did you oppose that statutory exception as well?

Mr. KLEIN. I am not aware we did.

Ms. NORTON. You are not aware of what OMB's position on that was?

Mr. KLEIN. I am not aware what the—we can get back to you.

Ms. NORTON. Someone behind you may know that.

Mr. KLEIN. I am told that the census bill was before the current exception was provided in the statute, so we did not.

Ms. NORTON. I see. You did not mention the fact that the Postal Service does not currently have the authority under title 5 to waive the offset.

Mr. KLEIN. It only applies to executive agencies.

Ms. NORTON. Do you believe this authority could, under present law, be applied to the Postal Service?

Mr. KLEIN. It could not.

Ms. NORTON. Why not?

Mr. KLEIN. The Postal Service is not recognized, in my understanding, as an executive agency. However, the statute could be amended to provide that coverage, extend that coverage.

Ms. NORTON. Would you support extending that coverage in that way, by statute?

Mr. KLEIN. If the pay-as-you-go provisions are resolved, we would.

Ms. NORTON. Let us leave that aside. We realize we in the Congress have to deal with that whenever we deal with—you seem to press that forward and attach it to each of your answers. Do not worry, our colleagues will see to it that we deal with that lousy \$500,000. We might actually be able to find it in a multitrillion-dollar budget.

We have a more serious problem here and that is whether this is the right thing to do from a policy standpoint and from a standpoint of the people involved. What I want to know is, all other things being equal, do you have any objection to the Postal Service getting this same authority?

Mr. KLEIN. I would have to defer to OMB on this, since it is their concern with the pay-as-you-go, but assuming in your condition that you—

Ms. NORTON. You have a mantra there that I have heard. I want to go beyond that mantra and deal with what it is you can deal with.

Mr. KLEIN. We think this is a better option than the current proposed bill.

Ms. NORTON. Than the one I have just mentioned?

Mr. KLEIN. We think it is.

Ms. NORTON. Would you support adding the post office to the list of agencies in title 5—oh, all right. I understand that.

I would like to explore other examples, because I understand that in granting waivers that the majority of requests received since 1990 have been granted.

Mr. KLEIN. Yes, we have approved about 58 or 59 percent of the requests. About half. They fall in two groups: The majority are recruiting difficulties, either a scientist or a medical officer or an engineer with a specialized skill that cannot be recruited on the outside and this person had been working for the agency in the past and has that capability. There have also been some emergency situations, for example, hurricanes and Defense Department closures that we have provided.

Ms. NORTON. Those examples pretty much parallel this one?

Mr. KLEIN. Sure.

Ms. NORTON. How long does it take OPM to evaluate and rule on a waiver request?

Mr. KLEIN. It takes on average 3 to 4 weeks. However, in emergency situations we can turn that around in a day or two. If we had some work in advance, we could cut that down to hours, or even, as I said, by generic advance waivers so that individuals could be approved on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. NORTON. I am pleased that Mr. Myers has joined us. I wonder if he has any questions or any opening statements he would like to make.

Mr. MYERS. Madam Chair, first of all, I apologize for getting here late. I serve on Appropriations also. We have a few matters over there and have some concern about 602(b), so we have been struggling to get some of those adjustments made. The District of Columbia is doing pretty well; \$20 million more than some of the rest of us.

Ms. NORTON. I am glad to hear that.

Mr. MYERS. Some of us really took a whack.

I am just now reading your testimony, so thank you for coming to testify, even though I may disagree. We have a peculiar situation in rural America where we just do not have enough people in a small post office to take care of emergencies. And there reaches a time you have to have this pool, that we have always had in the past, and people had the experience and people that knew the rural routes and knew the post office, that they would have to come in on maybe a temporary basis to work.

So this is the exception, and we hope that we have all the checks in here that limits it to 90 days, or collectively 180 days during a lifetime. We think we have the necessary tools built in to take care

of those emergencies without violating the intent of the retirement program, the buyouts and so on. We all want to protect that right, too. I presume we all support it.

So we can understand why there might be some misunderstanding, but then I think you have to understand that there is a difference in rural areas, in very, very small post offices in rural America, than in some of the large offices where you have a larger pool to collect from those already working.

If you have one or two rural carriers and maybe only two or three people in an office, you can have real emergencies in case of a flu epidemic or various things that can happen. And that was what the intent of our legislation was and is.

Thank you.

Mr. KLEIN. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Klein, very much for your testimony.

Could I ask Ms. Suzanne J. Henry to come forward at this time.

Ms. Henry is Vice President of Government Relations of the U.S. Postal Service.

STATEMENT OF SUZANNE J. HENRY, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Ms. HENRY. Thank you and good afternoon. I am Suzanne Henry. I am Vice President of Employee Relations for the U.S. Postal Service, and I am pleased to be here this afternoon to present the Postal Service's views on the Rural Area Relief Act of 1994.

First, let me thank Congressman Sawyer for introducing this important legislation and I would also like to thank him for his very, I think eloquent, discussion on the issues that are involved.

I would like to follow that discussion with the statement that the Postal Service supports this legislation. It would provide an important source of experienced people to ensure the continuity of service in rural areas. The legislation would create the opportunity for postal annuitants to be hired as leave replacements for rural letter carriers and postmaster positions without requiring, as current law and regulations do, a set-off against their annuity.

Currently, the annuity set-off rules make it very unattractive for annuitants to return to any kind of postal employment—a total of 58 annuitants are currently employed in the entire organization, and only one of these annuitants is a rural carrier working as a rural carrier and only three are working as postmaster reliefs.

Given this experience, any potential loss to the civil service retirement fund from removing the set-off requirement should be negligible, since the impact of the set-off has deterred annuitants from taking these appointments.

I am sure the committee is also concerned about potentially denying the opportunity to compete for postal employment to members of the communities we serve and would not want to pass legislation which would do this. In this regard, it is important to understand the nature of the employment opportunities we are talking about.

Rural carrier leave replacements normally work 1 day a week delivering the regular rural carrier's route on Saturday. They also must be available to cover the rural carrier's absences for annual

and sick leave. They earn only limited leave themselves and no other benefits. They must provide their own vehicle for conducting deliveries and be available on short notice. Their pay is \$10.54 per hour.

Postmaster reliefs work a variable but small number of hours to relieve the postmaster each week and cover absences for leave. They have financial accountability for the post office operations while they work and essentially stand in the place of the postmaster. They receive no benefits and are paid on a variable scale depending on the level of the office. This ranges from \$4.63 to \$7.70 per hour to start.

Currently, a postmaster relief who serves 3 years is eligible to compete with internal postal applicants for the postmaster position in the office where he or she is working. Otherwise, postmaster reliefs can become career postal employees only by taking a competitive examination for a craft position or by competing for a postmaster position along with other members of the community.

The descriptions of the requirements, demands and prospects for these two noncareer part-time positions should make it clear why it is often difficult to recruit and retain individuals to provide this coverage. In many cases, applicants on registers for career rural carrier vacancies are unwilling or unable to take such appointments, even though they potentially lead to full-time rural carrier positions. And postmasters themselves must identify their replacements, often a difficult task given the nature of the requirements.

While the difficulty of keeping these positions filled is not a universal problem in the Postal Service at all times, we have experienced it throughout the system at various times in most parts of the country. It tends to be most severe when a part of the country is experiencing very low unemployment and many people are unwilling to take intermittent employment.

Continuity of service is, of course, critical throughout the Postal Service. Our ability to operate delivery and retail services 6 days a week in rural areas where there is often only a postmaster and a rural carrier depends upon our ability to make these noncareer appointments. When this relief cannot be provided, the regular rural carrier and postmaster are unable to take the time off that they have earned and often need to use.

The proposed legislation would help fill these needs by making these opportunities attractive to a pool of workers who would not be deterred by what are drawbacks to other applicants. Annuitants would be less concerned about the intermittent nature of the work, the lack of benefits, the long wait for career opportunities or the unfamiliar demands of postal employment. The legislation would also provide an opportunity for these former postmasters and rural carriers to continue using their postal knowledge on a part-time basis.

This change would benefit our rural customers as well as our retired carriers and postmasters by keeping them in the customer service business they know so well. Additionally, it would allow them to stay connected with the Postal Service and the customers and the communities that they have served well, even as they begin their retirement.

The 90-day cap on annuitant employment will allow other applicants the opportunity to seek career appointments within the Postal Service. The lifetime limit of 180 days, however, would preclude the use of annuitants from being a long-term solution to rural service staffing problems.

Even with these limitations this bill would make available a qualified and motivated pool of people who can help assure the continuity of postal services in our rural areas. For that reason, the Postal Service supports this legislation.

That concludes my statement, and I would be glad to answer any questions, perhaps some from my personal base of having managed in rural areas in the Postal Service.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Henry follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SUZANNE J. HENRY, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Thank you and good afternoon.

I am Suzanne Henry, Vice President, Employee Relations, for the United States Postal Service.

I am pleased to be here this afternoon to present the Postal Service's views on the Rural Area Relief Act of 1994. First let me thank Chairman Sawyer for introducing this important legislation.

The Postal Service supports this legislation. It would provide an important source of experienced people to ensure the continuity of service in rural areas. The legislation would create the opportunity for postal annuitants to be hired as leave replacements for rural letter carrier and postmaster positions without requiring, as current law and regulations do, a set-off against their annuity. Currently, the annuity set-off rules make it very unattractive for annuitants to return to any kind of postal employment—a total of 58 are currently employed in the entire organization. Only 1 of these annuitants is working as a rural letter carrier leave replacement and 3 as postmaster reliefs.

Given this experience, any potential loss to the Civil Service Retirement Fund from removing the set-off requirement should be negligible, since the impact of the set-off has deterred annuitants from taking these appointments.

I am sure the Committee is also concerned about potentially denying the opportunity to compete for postal employment to members of the communities we serve, and would not want to pass legislation which would do this. In this regard, it is important to understand the nature of the employment opportunities we are talking about.

Rural carrier leave replacements normally work one day a week delivering the regular rural carrier's route on Saturday. They also must be available to cover the rural carrier's absences for annual and sick leave. They earn only limited leave and no other benefits. They must provide their own vehicle for conducting deliveries and be available on short notice. Their pay is \$10.54 per hour.

Postmaster reliefs work a variable but small number of hours to relieve the postmaster each week and cover absences for leave. They have financial accountability for the post office operations while they work and essentially stand in the place of the postmaster. They receive no benefits and are paid on a variable scale depending on the level of the office. This ranges from \$4.63 to \$7.70 per hour to start. Currently, a postmaster relief who serves three years is eligible to compete with internal postal applicants for the postmaster position in the office where he or she is working. Otherwise, postmaster reliefs can become career postal employees only by taking a competitive examination for a craft position or by competing for a postmaster position along with other members of the community.

The descriptions of the requirements, demands, and prospects for these two non-career part-time positions should make clear why it is often difficult to recruit and retain individuals to provide this coverage. In many cases, applicants on registers for career rural carrier vacancies are unwilling or unable to take such appointments, even though they potentially lead to full-time rural carrier positions. And, postmasters themselves must identify their replacements, often a difficult task given the nature of the requirements.

While this difficulty of keeping these positions filled is not a universal problem in the Postal Service at all times, we have experienced it throughout the system at various times in most parts of the country. It tends to be most severe when a part

of the country is experiencing very low unemployment and many people are unwilling to take intermittent employment.

Continuity of service is, of course, critical throughout the Postal Service. Our ability to operate delivery and retail services six days a week in rural areas where there is often only a postmaster and a rural carrier depends upon our ability to make these noncareer appointments. When this relief cannot be provided, the regular rural carrier and postmaster are unable to take the time off they have earned and need to use.

The proposed legislation would help fill these needs by making these opportunities attractive to a pool of workers who would not be deterred by what are drawbacks to other applicants. Annuitants would be less concerned about the intermittent nature of the work, the lack of benefits, the long wait for career opportunities or the unfamiliar demands of postal employment. It would also provide an opportunity for these former postmasters and rural letter carriers to continue using their postal knowledge on a part time basis. This change would benefit our rural customers as well as our retired carriers and postmasters by keeping them in the customer service business they know so well. Additionally, it would allow them to stay connected with the Postal Service and the customers and communities they have served well even as they begin retirement.

The annual 90-day cap on annuitant employment will allow other applicants the opportunity to seek career appointments within the Postal Service. The lifetime limit of 180 days, however, would preclude the use of annuitants from being a long-term solution to rural service staffing problems.

Even with these limitations, this bill would make available a qualified and motivated pool of people who can help assure the continuity of postal services in our rural areas. For that reason, the Postal Service supports this legislation.

Ms. NORTON. I will ask Mr. Sawyer to begin.

Mr. SAWYER. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

What kind of training do you provide now for people who come in as substitutes?

Ms. HENRY. Both postmaster jobs and rural carrier jobs are fairly complex jobs, and I think that that is not widely understood. Postmasters have tremendous financial responsibility and reporting responsibilities. For postmaster reliefs, as they come in, we provide them with our standard new employee orientation and then we provide them with varying levels of training depending on how large and complex their office is. Postmaster reliefs for the smallest offices receive 10 hours of training and assistance as they go along from the regular postmaster. Reliefs for some of the larger offices receive 24 hours of training.

Rural carriers receive 24 hours of classroom training and another 24 hours of on-the-job training before they start.

Mr. SAWYER. Do you have any sense of how much this costs?

Ms. HENRY. I don't have an exact figure for you, but you could begin by taking a look at their hourly wage and those number of hours. One would add on top of that, instructor time and the time of on-the-job trainers, other rural carriers, and other rural postmasters assistance. It is expensive.

Mr. SAWYER. Do we know how large that number might be across a very large and diffuse country?

Ms. HENRY. No. We could calculate it. But training is a big dollar in our budget; training for these positions is a big dollar. It is a wise investment.

Mr. SAWYER. Could we conceivably compare it to the \$500,000? Could you put it in some range that would be comparative with the \$500,000 that we have been told might be attributed to the consequences of this legislation?

Ms. HENRY. I suspect we spend considerably more training our postmasters and rural carriers across-the-board than anything that approximates a half million dollars.

Mr. SAWYER. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Myers.

Mr. MYERS. Well, thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Vice President, for bringing up one issue that I think is very important, that if the mail is to go through, and we have a responsibility to make sure the mail goes through in our rural areas; if it is not attractive for the person to go in there their pensions offset so that they work for literally nothing, you will not get people to work.

I think one of the next witnesses mentions a very small post office in Missouri where that just happened. You cannot get people to come in under the existing law. We all have an obligation to make sure the mail does go through, and if it is to go through, it has to be attractive enough for these people to come out of retirement temporarily to help out the post office. But if it will cost them money, why would they?

We have an obligation to make sure it goes through. And when we passed the other law, we did not intend the creation of this problem for the post office. So thank you for bringing that up. And the next two witnesses also will bring up the same issue. Very important.

Ms. HENRY. I think there is a uniqueness about the Postal Service that has to do with this tremendous commitment to provide 6-day-a-week service to the customers.

Mr. MYERS. For the time being, anyway. We hear flirtations of the idea that it might change.

Ms. HENRY. Indeed. And I think there is a distinction from a situation where you have a recruitment problem for a scientist or an engineer, and that is that we often have a very immediate need on a given day for a job that must be completed that day, and it is a complex job.

When we are faced with a situation where we have nobody to step in and fill that job, we have customers who are hurting and we will take extraordinary measures to see that those customers get their mail that day but that is often a very expensive and difficult proposition.

This piece of legislation would cover those kinds of daily emergency situations well.

Mr. MYERS. Back when I worked for a living, I ran a country bank. We had somewhat the same system. We were open five-and-a-half days a week. The bank was open 35 hours. Most people think bankers hours are from 9 to 3 or 10 to 2 and then you walk out the door. Anybody who has ever worked in a bank knows there is a lot of extra work afterwards. And we always had that same problem, and if you didn't have a pool of people who wanted to come in one to two days a week to help operate the bank, we could not have operated the bank without a lot of overtime. And of course no bank or organization wants to pay a lot of overtime. And it worked out for people who wanted to work part-time.

So I have been doing that for years, and I think it is most equitable to doing this in the post office.

Ms. HENRY. I think you have a good grasp on what the problem is here.

Mr. MYERS. I never worked in the post office.

Ms. HENRY. The issues are the same.

Mr. MYERS. However, I have been on the other side of the counter a lot. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Sawyer.

Mr. SAWYER. One quick followup, if I could. You have heard the proposal that this might be better handled on a case-by-case waiver basis. Could you describe for us either the ease or the relative difficulty you might have in undertaking this sort of thing on a case-by-case basis; that it would have to be justified in specific terms?

Ms. HENRY. Yes, and I would like to describe that from a personal perspective, if I may. Until about 20 months ago, I managed the southern part of the State of Oregon, 33,000 square miles with 100 or so rural post offices. And what happens in reality when you are running an operation like that is that you know sometimes at 6:30 in the morning when somebody's husband calls and says, I hospitalized my wife last night on an emergency basis, and she is the postmaster in the town and the only one there to open up the post office. At 6:30 in the morning you are faced with not being able to open up a post office with a truck to get in there and deliver the mail for the mail to be sorted and ready for the customers to provide service.

What you do at that point is you have an emergency on your hands that most likely and most often would be handled by postmaster relief who had been selected and was standing by. If that postmaster relief does not exist, you have nobody to open that office.

What we would do in that situation, obviously, is to call a post office that was as close by as possible, who might have a resource they could give up, a clerk who knew how to operate a post office, and he or she would drive 50 or 100 or 150 miles to go open up that post office.

When you have a situation like that, you cannot start at 6:30 in the morning a process that requires you to come up through an organization, through channels or even if you were to eliminate all those channels to get approval for a waiver to put somebody in to run that office that day. You just cannot do that. You have a very short period of time. You are really talking about minutes, sometimes hours, to get that office open.

It is my opinion that a waiver process, a case-by-case waiver process, as suggested, just simply is too cumbersome, too nonresponsive. It simply would not work. We need a better solution. This legislation provides that solution.

Mr. SAWYER. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. A better solution would be to request waivers in advance through some standard rather than on the day of the event basis?

Ms. HENRY. I think the difficulty is predicting where those events are going to occur and when they are going to occur. Some of them are predictable. If we had not been able to recruit in a community and we know that, and we know that a rural carrier

has planned a vacation for a month from now, we might be able to use that process.

But the reality is that more often than not we are faced with emergencies. We are faced with a rural carrier who has the flu, or whose wife went into delivery unexpectedly this morning. Those are the real-live situations.

Ms. NORTON. Can you not define those situations such that you could in advance say that in case of da, da, da, da, da, you could do this; and, thus, do this administratively simply by—

Ms. HENRY. In 30,000 locations around the country?

Ms. NORTON. No, no, you are not zeroing in on what I am saying. You are leaving case-by-case basis now and you grant the post office the authority in advance to grant waivers given certain circumstances and you define those circumstances, would you support that?

Ms. HENRY. I would think to make a system like that responsive and work to meet the needs, you would have to have that authority so close to the front line; you would have to have that kind of authority almost at the next boss level in order for that to be effective.

Ms. NORTON. Say that again, you need what?

Ms. HENRY. You need to have that kind of approval authority right at the front line right at the next boss level because when you are talking about the emergency, the unplanned, the unknown kinds of situations, in a business like ours where that mail has to be delivered today, that post office needs to be opened up to serve the customers today, you cannot put off getting approval.

Ms. NORTON. So the front line person would have to have the authority to make the decision even if you define the categories.

Ms. HENRY. That is exactly right.

Ms. NORTON. So the front line person could be given that authority in the Postal Service, I suppose.

Ms. HENRY. This legislation I believe does exactly that kind of thing.

Ms. NORTON. What I am asking you certainly does. Ultimately, for example, if we reach, if we find the pay-go problem is a problem or given OPM's objection, I am trying to have as much of an idea as I can of the possibilities that would work, and what I am asking is if the responsible person in the chain of command closest to the event had the authority and the authority was categorized by events, would that work?

Ms. HENRY. I would think that that would work, if it was that close. Now, I am not a legislative expert and so it would seem to me that that would need to be addressed very separately.

As I hear discussed the waiver provision for emergency reasons, where life and property are at risk, I think that that would not cover our situation.

Ms. NORTON. That is why I have looked at this manual. That is one, and the other is a case-by-case basis for employees in positions, and we know that wouldn't work very well based on what you have said. We know that based on the questioning of Mr. Sawyer that this is not in fact always an emergency of a kind that seems to be contemplated in the regulations. That is why I am trying to see whether their regulations could otherwise accommodate

an advance waiver or for that matter to ask you—did somebody want to ask you a question?

Mr. MYERS. I don't think there is that much flexibility in the system. As I understand it, you would have to go through OPM in advance, and OPM is already objecting to the procedure so how in the world will you get eight proved ahead of time in time to take care of somebody? It is a case by case but there is not that flexibility.

Mr. SAWYER. Unless what they are talking about is doing it on an agency-wide basis ahead of time, in order to avoid a run of agencies coming in asking for this kind of an exemption. That is the point. It seems to me that that is turning a somersault to accomplish the avoidance of one kind of concern, a legitimate concern in a way that doesn't work very well for this circumstance. That is the difficulty. I think there may be ways to address this, but it just seems to me that is a very difficult way to deal with that.

Mr. MYERS. The safest way is statutorily.

Mr. SAWYER. The safest way is statutorily. Particularly when the statute builds in the annual and lifetime limits. It would avoid providing an incentive to retire early.

Ms. NORTON. Would you support adding the Postal Service to the list of agencies in title V that can request a waiver to the offset provisions of the OPM?

Ms. HENRY. I think that that would be valuable for specific circumstances such as, and I think it has been alluded to earlier, real emergency situations like an earthquake. We have got many employees who because of that earthquake can't get to work, and we have got employees, retired employees who maybe can get to work and can get us through a couple weeks of emergency time. That would be an appropriate and valuable thing to do.

Ms. NORTON. So you would like that anyway?

Ms. HENRY. It would not, however, I think address the problem that this particular piece of legislation addresses.

Ms. NORTON. But you would like that authority, anyway?

Ms. HENRY. Certainly.

Mr. MYERS. Don't you have that authority now?

Ms. HENRY. As we understand it, as I understand it, we are not covered under that waiver provision.

Ms. NORTON. But not an executive agency.

Mr. MYERS. The waiver is provided by statute, but it is not in advance, though, that is what she is speaking about.

Ms. NORTON. It is not provided—it is provided only to executive agencies.

Ms. HENRY. That is my understanding, also. I believe that is OPM's understanding.

Mr. MYERS. I see OPM shaking their heads. Some are shaking no and some are shaking yes. That somewhat answers the question, too, she is asking.

Ms. HENRY. It is ambiguous.

Ms. NORTON. Who has it—here is the statute—who has it is executive agencies, the administrative office of the courts, and God help us, the Congress.

Mr. MYERS. It will never happen, then. Better go statutorily.

Ms. HENRY. I just think it is important to note that as we read it that waiver will not help solve the problem that we are talking about today.

Ms. NORTON. Yes. As you read the bill, who would decide when a retiree should be allowed to use this relief, the Postal Service, the rural postmasters, the rural letter carrier? Who in the chain of command would decide?

Ms. HENRY. I would assume if this piece of legislation passes, that we would put in place some policy direction on implementing it. I would argue that that should be at the lowest possible level.

Ms. NORTON. I noticed you said that postmasters must identify their replacements. What does that mean?

Ms. HENRY. It is just simply a process that a postmaster relief, a postmaster replacement is a very common thing in the Postal Service, and the postmaster has the primary responsibility for recruiting within the community and identifying the individual who will take over in her or his absence.

Ms. NORTON. Are you serious? Today, you mean when somebody retires or leaves?

Ms. HENRY. No, I am sorry, only the person who is designated to take over for short-term absences. If there is a true vacancy, then, yes, that selection would follow our normal management selection process.

Ms. NORTON. All right. Does the Postal Service have a definition of rural area?

Ms. HENRY. I don't know.

Ms. NORTON. Well, how do you know who rural letter carriers are going to be?

Ms. HENRY. The rural letter carrier?

Ms. NORTON. Or rural postmasters, for that matter?

Ms. HENRY. Rural postmasters are loosely defined as the postmasters who are in smaller offices in the more remote rural areas, and I don't believe that we have ever drawn an official distinction between a rural postmaster and a city postmaster. The job title is postmaster; the job is fundamentally the same. The size of office varies, and what happens is that you typically get your smaller offices in the more rural areas, the smaller communities.

Ms. NORTON. If we were trying to respond to some of the objections of OPM, one of the things we would want to do is make sure that we all had the same thing in mind when we said rural letter carriers. There are some parts of Bethesda that seem very rural to me.

Ms. HENRY. Yes, and there are some suburban areas that are designated as rural delivery areas, although I should clarify something in that the postmaster relief position is only attached to our smaller offices. Once you get into larger offices—

Ms. NORTON. What is the size office we are talking about?

Ms. HENRY. Level 15 and below.

Ms. NORTON. Fifteen people and below?

Ms. HENRY. No, I am sorry, that is a job designation. How do I explain this? It is in a relatively small community.

Ms. NORTON. I tell you what, Ms. Henry, I am hearing—what I am hearing now is straight out of the book of unintended consequences. That is to say, what you have said in testimony that has

come here has been compelling with respect to the need where there is a need, but unless one is very clear precisely who we are talking about, what does the Bible say about who can crawl through the eye of a needle, this needle has an awfully big eye as I hear your responses. That is the kind of thing that plays into the hands of the OPM criticism.

Ms. HENRY. Do let me clarify it, though, because as you get into larger cities and larger post offices, you have a staffing and management structure in those offices that when the postmaster is gone takes over, and so you don't even have approved or designated a postmaster relief. That position that we are looking for in this piece of legislation, that this piece of legislation covers, doesn't even exist except in our smallest, most rural communities in the country, and so there really is a very clear designation.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Sawyer might want to look at it. I haven't looked that closely at the bill to see if the area is defined specifically enough.

Mr. SAWYER. I think we may have folks who can comment on this, and I would hope that we could revisit this question in a few minutes. It seems to me that what we are talking about is probably more a matter of table of organization within a particular employment situation rather than a hard and fast designation based on census tract definitions of what is rural and what is not. Those definitions exist, but they may not have a practical application in terms of the problems of delivering the mail, and it really reflects a question of replacements available within a particular post office organizational structure.

Ms. HENRY. The rural carrier routes and the small offices that would be covered by these are established in such a way that if you are concerned about it not having a control point, it would indeed be controlled by those things, and therefore limited. If that is your concern.

Ms. NORTON. I am sure we could elaborate on that; as Mr. Sawyer said, we may get more information on that shortly. How much do relief carriers and postmasters earn? On the average?

Ms. HENRY. They earn an hourly wage, so their actual salary depends on how much they work. If a rural carrier, in a given month, only works four Saturdays, covering for the regular rural carrier, then they would work four Saturday's worth at \$10.54. If it happens that that rural carrier is recovering from major surgery and out for 4 weeks, then that rural carrier replacement would make a full month's salary at that hourly wage.

Ms. NORTON. Do you aggressively recruit women? Does the Postal Service aggressively recruit women for these positions?

Ms. HENRY. Oh, absolutely. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of our postmasters are women, as is a large percentage of our rural carriers.

Ms. NORTON. Have you attempted to offer these jobs to older workers who haven't been with the service or worked through organizations like the AARP?

Mr. MYERS. Or retired Congressmen?

Ms. HENRY. We actively look within the community and have obviously no age discrimination or limitations at all.

Ms. NORTON. I am just trying to find out do you actively recruit from retired people? I know you don't discriminate.

Ms. HENRY. Yes, it would depend on the community and how difficult that recruitment is. Typically we would not, for instance, go through the AARP. More typically in these rural communities if we are recruiting, we would recruit in the lobby of the post office, in the grange hall, in the community center, the town center, in those places because we typically pull from the community from which we serve, so it would be unlikely for us to advertise in the AARP publication, for instance, or that sort of thing.

Ms. NORTON. What is your current vacancy rate for relief positions?

Ms. HENRY. I don't know. I would have to check. We would have to, I think, take a look at the specific statistics on that.

Ms. NORTON. That would be important information for us to have. Would you submit it for the record?

Ms. HENRY. Yes, we will see if we can.

Ms. NORTON. Within 30 days.

[The information referred to follows:]

At the beginning of FY 1993, there were 12,340 Postmaster Relief/Leave Replacements (PMR/LR). During FY 1993, 1,920 separations were processed for this category. This represents 15.5% of the PMR/LR positions.

At the beginning of FY 1993 there were 40,286 in the various rural carrier leave replacement categories. During FY 1993, 5,537 separations were processed for these categories. This represents 13.7% of the rural carrier leave replacement positions.

Ms. NORTON. Do you have any hard evidence that retirees would, in fact, accept these relief jobs if the offset rules allowed them to do so?

Ms. HENRY. We don't have a specific survey of postal annuitants or anything like that. What I do know, and certainly if you attend State conventions and national conventions of postmasters, rural carriers, places where retired postal people gather, what you will find over and over again are large numbers of people who loved their job, loved their customers, loved their work, they have retired, and they would be very happy to come back and serve on an emergency basis for a few days here and a few days there. They would find that, I think, very satisfying and they would be very, very willing to do that. So you hear a lot; we have never done any specific survey. I am convinced that we would have a large number of people who would be willing to do that.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Ms. Henry.

Mr. Sawyer, Mr. Myers, any other questions? Thank you very much. It was very helpful testimony.

May I call the final panel, Mr. William R. Brown, Jr., president of the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association; Mr. Armando Olvera, president of the National League of Postmasters; Ms. Teena Cregan, director of government relations, National Association of Postmasters of the United States.

You may proceed in any order which is comfortable for you.

STATEMENTS OF ARMANDO OLVERA, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POSTMASTERS, ACCCOMPANIED BY PENNY DIMLER, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS; WILLIAM R. BROWN, JR., PRESIDENT, NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION; TEENA CREGAN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POSTMASTERS OF THE UNITED STATES, ACCCOMPANIED BY KENNETH H. VLIETSTRA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POSTMASTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. OLVERA. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

My name is Armando Olvera, I am president of the National League of Postmasters. With me is Penny Dimler, the director of government relations.

I want to thank you for holding this hearing on 3246, and also a special thanks for Congressman Sawyer and his staff for doing a wonderful job in getting this bill put together.

I am privileged to present the views of America's postmasters, active and retired, on behalf of our rural members and customers. H.R. 3246 is about providing uninterrupted, consistent, quality service in rural communities. This bill provides for retired postal workers to work on a very limited basis as substitutes for postmasters and rural letter carriers when an immediate replacement is not available, and this measure would allow these retirees to be paid the appropriate wage with no penalty on their annuity.

Let me make this point that we are not talking about big bucks here. The range of pay for a postmaster in this area if they indeed got the top pay of a postmaster relief would range from \$8.33 an hour to \$13.86, and some of the problems that relate to recruiting in these post offices relate to the starting salary. The bottom scale is \$4.63 up to \$7.70. That is the starting scale at that level of postmaster reliefs.

To help you better understand why this bill is needed, I would like to share with you some actual cases from the field.

Last week, I was at a meeting also attended by Mark Rosenbaum, postmaster from Aldrich, MO. In his absence, Mark's rural PMR, postmaster relief, was covering the office in spite of the fact that she was suffering from pneumonia.

Mark left home on Sunday morning to attend this convention in Minnesota. On Monday he called checking his office to see if everything was all right. He found out she was there and indeed was working, because she is the relief. There is no other relief available. However, as he pointed out, there are two retired postmasters. One lives in Aldrich and one lives about 20 miles away, so one of them would have been the logical choice to call on in such an emergency. Unfortunately, present law makes such a choice unattractive because you really would lose—you would be working for nothing basically.

In another instance a League postmaster in South Dakota is very concerned that she may miss her son's wedding in June because of problems in finding an appropriate substitute for her post office. What really frustrates her is knowing that there is a postal retiree who lives in her town who would make a great occasional substitute, but that person is more than likely not willing to work without pay, and Joan will stay home and keep her post office open

even if she has to give up her son's wedding and miss her plane and give up the money that she has spent on these nonrefundable air tickets. But this is the kind of dedication that our postmasters and rural carriers have in these rural communities.

In both cases, personal sacrifices are required to put quality and service first. H.R. 3246 would eliminate such sacrifices, while providing an uninterrupted, quality service in both of these cities.

Throughout rural America, we have the frequently cited cases where a postmaster has had to close a door of the office in order to go out and deliver the mail when there was no rural carrier relief available. Again, this bill would go a long way towards improving this situation.

These are not hypothetical situations. I have with me letters from League postmasters telling me what it is like to keep the mail flowing in these small communities when one of them or the rural carrier is or should be out. With your permission I would like to submit these letters for the record.

Ms. NORTON. So ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]

Queen Creek, AZ.

DEAR ARMANDO: In four years I have hired RCAs four times. I am currently in that process.

In this office I have a high rate of turnover. Most people want a full-time job, not a day twice a month or once a week. When we are without substitutes we have carriers that are not able to have a day off, or who leave for family needs, emergencies or sick leave. This causes me a higher rate of overtime than normal, costing us more money. It also means that I have to assist carriers with streeting the mail, making Express Mail delivery runs or driving a route to help out. Being placed in this type of position means that I have more customer complaints because of misdeliveries and later delivery during the day. Some days my carriers are out delivering mail until 6:50 pm. This is unacceptable. However, there is nothing that I can do about it.

If I had the ability to hire postal retirees with their postal experience and their availability, it would help bring relief or eliminate this problem. It would eliminate customer dissatisfaction, employee fatigue and low morale. It would also give me time to do my postmaster responsibilities rather than delivering the mail.

Thank you for your efforts in getting this bill passed.

Yours truly,

ELTA I. RUMPF, *Postmaster.*

Higley, AZ.

DEAR MR. OLVERA: I am writing in reference to the legislative bill, HR 3246. I would like to encourage Congress to pass this bill.

Recently I was OIC in an office which is still short-staffed. There are clerks and carriers due to go on vacation without a replacement. The retired postmaster lives in this community. He would not need any additional training and it would be beneficial to the office to utilize this option. One of the clerks has to use 50 hours of annual leave or lose it before the end of the year.

Thank you for your efforts in getting this bill.

Yours truly,

MARY LOU HINDAL, *Postmaster.*

Estelline, SD.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This is a testimony in support of HR 3246 which would allow the use of retirees to help out as emergency replacements without annuity penalties.

I am the Postmaster at a level 13 office with PMR hours on Saturday only. Therefore, my PMR also has and needs another job. Her other boss has been very lenient about letting her off whenever I needed her, and yet she has an income when I don't

need her. Now that her other boss is going out of business she is forced to look for another job. In a town of this size (pop. 700), that will probably mean a job out-of-town and a boss that is not so lenient.

Right now I am scheduled to attend by state League convention the last week of April and my son's wedding on a carnival cruise in Florida the first week of June. My PMR won't sign her resignation until she has another job, and I don't blame her, because at least it is some income. But the hiring process takes so long that even if she signs tomorrow, there wouldn't be time to get a new PMR in time for the State Convention and maybe not by June 1st. My old PTF clerk retired with the early out in September of 1992 but still lives in town. With very little refresher training, she would be able to take over for those two weeks if necessary. Perhaps I'll be able to borrow a clerk from another office for June, but it would mean considerable more training. Because a lot of the other Postmasters will also be attending the Convention, the chance of borrowing for that is less likely.

The monetary loss if I schedule my flight and cruise ticket and am unable to go is around of \$1000.00, to say nothing of the fact that I'll miss my son's wedding. Knowing that I could use the retired clerk would take considerable stress off the situation and would give me time to see if the PMR could find a job in town that perhaps would work in with her job at the Post Office saving the Postal Service the costs of hiring and training a new PMR. The way I see it, being able to use a retiree in an emergency situation such as mine would be a "win-win" situation for all concerned.

Sincerely,

JOAN PRESTRUDE, *Postmaster.*

West Liberty, IA.

DEAR ARMANDO: I didn't think too much one way or the other about HR 3246 until I was left without a RCA. In two weeks I have five borrowed RCAs on one route. I would have given anything if I could have called a Retired Postmaster to carry this route until the regular carrier returned or a new RCA was hired.

Sincerely,

ZETA RICHARDS-BARNETT, *Postmaster.*

Bowling Green, SC

DEAR MR. OLVERA: I have been the Postmaster in Bowling Green, SC for almost eight years. In that time, I have hired an average of one Postmaster Relief every eight months. This has not only caused a burden on me, because my work load does not stop so that I can train a new relief, but it also affects the service my customers receive from a new employee with minimal postal knowledge.

When I went to Bowling Green, I had a career employee who very much wanted to stay on part-time. But as you know, this was not possible. The passing of this bill would greatly help Postmasters like myself who need help in the times when a relief has left the service and another has not been found. These retirees are usually very dedicated people would serve customers with the knowledge that our customers all deserve.

I wish you luck in this passage.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH B. PATTON, *Postmaster.*

Hendersonville, NC.

DEAR MR. OLVERA: Since October, 1993, I have been trying to hire RCAs. Many days my Supervisor has had to deliver and case these rural routes.

The service to my customers has been less than satisfactory when I have experienced this severe shortage of RCAs in my office.

If the bill had been passed to let retirees work, my service standard would not have been altered.

Sincerely,

JUDY DEPUE, *Postmaster.*

Barnstead, NH.

DEAR MR. OLVERA: With regard to HR 3236 and PMR availability, I would like to say that because my PMR was not available, I could not attend my aunt's funeral

at Arlington Cemetery last April. I have also been unable to attend conventions and Post Office meetings and have had difficulty in planning vacations.

Sincerely,

JOHN G. COTTON, *Postmaster.*

Oakwood, IL.

DEAR ARMANDO: At Mansfield, IL 61854, the Postmaster has no help, PTF or PMR. On April 21st and 22nd, we had a 2-day mandatory Postmaster meeting. On the 20th, arrangements were made for a rural carrier from another office to cover so the Postmaster could attend the meeting. The rural carrier had served as an OIC 8 years ago.

Sincerely,

NANCY JENNINGS, *Postmaster.*

St. Joseph, IL.

DEAR ARMANDO: The St. Joseph, IL 61873, Post Office has 2 rural routes plus an auxiliary route. I have 2 rural carriers and one RCA to carry the work load for 3 routes. On Monday, April 24, 1994, one of the regular rural carriers was on annual leave and the RCA that was scheduled for our office had to work in her office. Since no one else was available, my clerk carried the auxiliary route on her lunch hour. I was attending the League Convention. This is the second time this has happened since February 5th. On this date, I carried the route assisted by a clerk. We really need to look at the availability of help.

Sincerely,

PEGGY DUNCAN, *Postmaster.*

Greenwood, NE.

Re: Concerning hiring retired postmasters.

DEAR ARMANDO: While a Postmaster at Davey, NE 68336, in December, 1990, my PMR quit. I worked for 10 months until October of 1991 without a PMR. Saturdays were overtime.

October, 1991, I hired someone who could pass the physical requirements but could not understand the cash book and handle the office work. She quit after 2 months.

March, 1992 I had a medical emergency. I had to find someone to run the post office while I had surgery. I borrowed a clerk from a neighboring office which made two offices without a backup.

June, 1992, 1½ years later, I hired a young woman who could pass the physical requirements and handle the office work.

The overtime and the stress could have been reduced, if I could have used the Retired Postmaster who lived in town.

Sincerely,

NANCY TYRRELL, *Postmaster.*

Gifford, IL.

DEAR ARMANDO: I was appointed Postmaster in Gifford, IL in February, 1993. My PTF was serving a detail as OIC and continued to serve as OIC until she was appointed Postmaster in Dewey, IL in October, 1993. During this time, I worked six days a week. I had two loaners who had stamp credits in my office but could only work in my office when they were not needed, which usually meant if I wanted a day off, I had to come in and sort the mail until someone could get there to replace me. I have had two worksheets. The first one had a 10 point veteran, whose medical conditions made it impossible for him to perform the work. On my second list I also had a 10 point veteran as #1. I am awaiting his medical records, physical, etc., and other credentials to see if he would be suitable.

I had a difficult time being able to attend my state convention. A clerk from another area is replacing me. Her Postmaster broke his elbow this weekend and is working with a broken elbow until I get back.

Also, I am currently working 8 hours on Saturday and having Monday as my non-scheduled day so that after more than a year, I can have 2 days off in a row until I can finally get a clerk in place.

Sincerely,

JULIE VAN AURON, *Postmaster.*

Murdock, NE.

DEAR ARMANDO: I was asked by a fellow League member to give you an example of how my Office could have utilized a retired postal employee who has worked at this office for 18 years.

February of this year, I was inbetween RCAs and was waiting for the Human Resource Office that takes care of this office to send out a hiring list. My carrier usually takes a trip to Las Vegas this time of year with his wife and family friends. Because I was unable to get another RCA from a neighboring office to fill in, I could not let him take leave. If I would have been able to call upon the retired carrier from this office, my regular carrier could have taken annual leave.

I have visited with the retired carrier from this office, and he is very much interested in filling in when the regular carrier and RCA cannot.

Thank you for your time and concern with this matter.

Sincerely,

ANGELA K. GRIESSELL, *Postmaster.*

St. Ignatius, MT.

DEAR ARMANDO: I hope it isn't too late to let you know why I am supporting HR 3246 which would allow us to use Retired Postmasters or rural carriers for a limited time in an emergency situation.

After the reorganization, I lost one PTF clerk to retirement and the other was with me as needed pending a transfer. This is the only help I had. The neighboring towns that I used to borrow from lost their PTF clerks to retirement. They were replaced with PMRs.

In January, my husband broke his leg in three places and couldn't put it to the ground for four months. A week after he broke it, he passed a blood clot. Fortunately it was on a Sunday. I was there and could get him to the hospital. The Billings District was aware of my situation, but they were short too. I thought my husband was okay in the hospital, because he was on blood thinners. But on Monday while I was back at work he passed three more blood clots and was so near death that it was a week before we knew he'd be okay. That was the first time in my life I felt like the Postal Service "used" me. I took a full year to recover emotionally from that incident. Even after I got two new clerks, I still couldn't leave because they weren't trained adequately for me to leave this size office (level 15).

If I had been able to use the Retired Postmaster here, I could have spent the time with my family when I should have. I whole heartedly support this bill.

Sincerely,

LAVONNE L. OLMSTED, *Postmaster.*

Lyndonville, VT.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: On Monday, May 2, 1994, I was called to a Level 11 Post Office where the Postmaster had a problem. She had passed out and required being removed by the Rescue Squad. I was unable to get the PMR, because she was being used to cover another office where the Postmaster and PMR were both out sick. Had we had the option of calling on a Retired Postmaster to cover for that situation, the people of the area would have been better served.

I strongly support the pending legislation to allow Postal Retirees, PMRs and Rural Carriers, to be hired on a limited basis.

Sincerely,

JEROME REEN, *Postmaster.*

Lochmere, NH.

DEAR ARMANDO: Here is my paper of examples for use in the hearing on bill HR 3246. Hope it will help.

The Postmaster in Twin Mountain, NH, a level 13 office has been working alone since mid March and will do so for another few weeks. His PMR had a skiing accident and cannot work. She will be back in two weeks on limited duty but cannot work alone. He has two Retired Postmasters in his area who may have been able to help out. He is in a very rural area of the state. He was going to miss our quarterly Postmaster meeting because he had no coverage, but it happened to fall on April 27th, the national day of mourning. The meeting was held and he could attend because his office was closed.

Last summer I covered a level 13 office about 4 miles from my office, because the Postmaster had reservations for a vacation which had been planned for a year in advance and his PMR was expecting a baby any day. There was no one else to cover in case of emergency. My PMR came to cover my office while I covered his for the week. This was Winnisquam, NH.

Two years ago I filled in at another nearby post office so the Postmaster could attend his mother-in-law's funeral. As it was, he worked part of the three days, because my PMR wasn't available. Even when I fill in, I don't know the office well enough to do as good a job as the regular substitute. This was in Sanbornton, NH.

In my own office, I am lucky that my PMR is available most of the time, but I have missed some important meetings as League President because I didn't have any back-up coverage when she was unavailable. I also work with many schools with the Wee Deliver Program. Sometimes not having coverage causes me to miss certain events in the Wee Deliver Program, because I have no one to replace me. A former Retired Postmaster from this office lives right in town and, although we have never discussed it, he probably would work occasionally in an emergency situation.

When I take a vacation and I'm out of the area, it certainly adds stress to know that there is no back-up help if something happens to my replacement.

My husband is retiring from public school teaching and can work 40% of full-time in a public school with no adjustment to his annuity.

We have many Postmasters working overtime, especially on Saturdays, because they have no one to fill-in for them. The Postmaster in Barnstead, NH, missed her aunt's funeral because she had no one to replace her. She has also missed meetings and training because no back-up was available.

We have many Retired Postmasters in our state who would be willing to work occasionally to help in an emergency situation.

Sincerely,

MARJORIE BONNEVILLE, *Postmaster.*

Mapleton, OR.

DEAR ARMANDO: This letter is in regard to the bill H.R. 3246 which you will be testifying on behalf of on May 12th. Rhonda Heller brought to my attention this morning and I do feel it is needed. At my office, I have been short a substitute rural carrier since the hiring worksheet had no one that could work part-time the first go round. The biggest problem is that they couldn't take off from their full-time job for two to three weeks to get trained to be able to work part-time. I carried the route several times.

In December, I had carriers sick and still working. On December 27th, I had to work with bronchial pneumonia and had been in bed all weekend to cover for a carrier who had gotten sick the day before Christmas and couldn't shake it. We worked as a team to get mail out in our office. The only carrier I had able to work pulled all the mail I had cased and delivered two routes in 9½ hours. We did that for 2 days and the regular came back only because she felt guilty. I guess we really are dedicated to the Postal Service. My family says I eat, sleep and talk it. Since the problem, I borrowed a person, but he seemed to be needed in his own office more and more and wasn't much help. Then in February, he told me he couldn't do it at all any more because he was leaving my area. They gave the carrier tests March 3rd and when they finally sent down the hiring worksheet, I had 3 individuals. The others with remaining high scores had been selected. Only one could work but wasn't really my choice of an employee. So now, I'm waiting for another worksheet some time in the next week or two.

I had an employee come to me and want to transfer from another office and that got shot down real quick. The employee ended up quitting her present job. So we lost there.

I have problems taking time off to go anywhere because of no rural carrier backup. My PMR could not do what I do to get the routes out and I don't feel I can expect that of her. I got away the 15th of April and felt guilty because my other

carriers can't have a day off. Vacations are coming up and they don't know whether to make plans. I have just forgotten about any conventions and meetings like we had in Springfield because of this. I do not have a carrier that is retired that I could call on at this time, if this bill would be passed, but I sure could look for one real fast.

Good luck on working toward the passage of H.R. 3246.

Sincerely,

ALICE DAILY, Postmaster.

Newport Center, VT.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: I am a Retired Postmaster with 32 years of experience.

I do not want to return to work as a Postmaster, but I will never forget all the benefits I received as a Postmaster or the good pension and benefits I now receive as a Retired Postmaster.

Because of this, I would be glad to return to work in an emergency situation, because I am experienced and feel I could much better serve the customers than a stranger, and I have the good of the Postal Service at heart.

I think there is a need for the passage of H.R. 3246 to cover emergency situations in rural areas of the country.

Sincerely,

LORRAINE J. MALONEY, Retired Postmaster.

Cortland, NE.

PRESIDENT ARMANDO: This incident happened in my office.

My RCA resigned after many years of service. The rural carrier was also a trainer for new hired RCAs. We had no one that could carry the route except me, the Postmaster. So when the rural carrier needs the day off, I carried the mail. Soon we trained another RCA from a neighboring town. We used that person until we hired a new RCA. We need an RCA every month for 4 or 5 days. I know of a retired rural carrier who would enjoy doing the route to help out.

My neighboring town had a Postmaster who got terribly ill. The doctor wanted her home for a week. Her PMR was out of town. She called her surrounding towns and mine was one. I worked for her one week. Then her PMR returned. A Retired Postmaster would have certainly been great to help out.

Now in June, My PMR will be out of town and I am scheduled for two training sessions. In order to be able to attend, I will need to train and borrow someone for four days.

I wish you well on testifying on behalf of our bill, H.R. 3246.

Sincerely,

ROJAYNE HARRINGTON, Postmaster.

Mr. OLVERA. Under the current system, postmaster reliefs and rural carrier associates have no postal background. With brief training and some practice, they do a fine job, and with more work, they do an even better job.

Retirees available to substitute, even on a limited basis, would enlarge this current pool of possible reliefs, improving the overall quality and availability of relief service. With their knowledge of the community and of the Postal Service procedures, it would require no significant training.

Retirees would not replace PMR's and RCA's. They would supplement them. Because of the reorganization and the large number of early outs taken last year, the current group of retirees is larger and younger than usual. It seems a waste to me to overlook these people.

This bill has other advantages to offer. The cost to the Federal Government is negligible. In my opinion, you are having to pay the retiree anyway; you have to pay a relief person anyway. These people are not in career positions, so they are not under the Federal

Retirement Act. They are paying Social Security. They do not consider, and I don't think they would even want to consider, their service as part of the service toward any additional retirement.

I realize that OPM could be concerned that this bill would set a precedent for others to follow, and I really can't see how. The Postal Service is unique. What other government entity serves customers 6 days a week, in every corner of America. I understand that the Postal Service would request a waiver from OPM. Does OPM really want to deal with hundreds of cases nationwide day-to-day, day-in and day-out on a 24-hour-a-day basis? Using the example that I gave, could we get in touch with somebody to grant a waiver on a Sunday?

This bill offers a logical, sensible solution to a specialized but widely occurring problem. The problem affects quality of service and customer satisfaction. It also affects the morale of hard working, efficient postmasters who are thwarted and frustrated when they cannot meet their own high standards.

The Postal Service has a commitment to providing on time and quality service to every community in America, no matter how remote the location or sparse the population. This bill is necessary, because it will help alleviate temporary staffing problems in these communities by adding experienced, knowledgeable, and proven individuals to the relief pool.

When our postmasters talk about this bill, they say it would create a win-win situation. The Postal Service wins, the postmaster wins, and, most of all, postal customers win.

On behalf of rural postmasters, rural carriers in all of rural America, the National League of Postmasters thanks you for your support of this bill. I would be available for any questions.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Olvera.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Olvera follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ARMANDO OLVERA, PRESIDENT,
NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POSTMASTERS

Madam Chair, I am Armando Olvera, President of the National League of Postmasters, and accompanying me today is Penny Dimler, the League's Director of Government Relations.

Thank you for holding this hearing on HR 3246, the Rural Area Relief Act, a bill which will enable rural Postmasters to provide quality service to their communities with the same consistency presently enjoyed in urban communities.

I am very pleased to note, Madam Chair, that you are a cosponsor of this bill along with Mr. Young, Mrs. Morella, and at least 130 of your House colleagues. Thank you also for inviting Mr. Sawyer, sponsor of HR 3246, to participate in this hearing. This commonsense bill has broad bipartisan support from representatives of urban as well as rural areas.

I am privileged to represent the views of America's Postmasters, active and retired, on behalf of our rural members and customers.

HR 3246 is about providing uninterrupted, consistent, quality service in rural communities. This bill provides for retired postal workers to work on a very limited basis as substitutes for Postmasters and rural letter carriers when an immediate replacement is not available. This measure would allow these retirees to be paid the appropriate wage with no penalty to their annuity. Without appropriate compensation, what retiree would want to come back to work for even a day?

To help you better understand why this bill is needed, I would like to share with you some actual cases from the field.

Last week I was at a meeting also attended by Mark Rosenbaum, the Postmaster from Aldrich, Missouri (population: 76). In his absence, Mark's regular (Postmaster Relief) was covering at the Aldrich Post Office in spite of the fact that she was suffering from pneumonia. (Mark did not know this before he left.) No other substitute

was available. However, two retired Postmasters live in or near Aldrich. One of them would be the logical choice to call on in such an emergency. Unfortunately, present law makes such a choice unattractive.

In another instance, Joan Prestrude, a LEAGUE Postmaster in Estelline, South Dakota, is very concerned that she may miss her son's wedding in June because of problems in finding the appropriate substitute for her post office. What really frustrates her is knowing that a postal retiree who lives in her town would make a great occasional substitute, but that person probably is not willing to work without pay. Joan will stay home and keep her post office open if she can find no remedy to this situation. She will also miss her son's wedding and lose the money paid for non-refundable airline tickets. This is the kind of dedication our people have.

In both cases personal sacrifices are required to put quality and service first. HR 3246 would eliminate such sacrifices while providing for uninterrupted quality service in Aldrich and Estelline.

Throughout rural America, we have the frequently cited case where a postmaster has locked the front door of the Post Office in order to go deliver the mail because the rural carrier is sick and no substitute is available. Again HR 3246 would go a long way towards improving this situation.

Are these hypothetical situations? No, they are not. I have here with me letters from LEAGUE Postmasters telling me what it is like to keep the mail flowing in their small communities when one of them or the rural carrier is or should be out. With your permission I would like to submit these letters for the record.

Under the current system, where they are available, the usual substitutes are Postmaster Reliefs (PMRs) and Rural Carrier Associates (RCAs). They have no postal background. With brief training and some practice, they do a fine job. However, there just are not enough of them! Reliefs are hard to find in many remote areas and they are subject to a high rate of turnover.

Retirees available to substitute, even on a limited basis, would enlarge the current pool of reliefs, improving the overall quality and availability of relief service. With their knowledge of the community and of Postal Service procedures, they would require no significant training.

Retirees would not replace PMRs and RCAs. They would supplement them. Because of reorganization and the large number of "early-outs" taken last year, the current group of retirees is larger and younger than usual. It seems a waste to overlook them!

This bill has other advantages to offer. The cost to the federal government is negligible. The Postal Service stands to come out ahead because of reduced training costs and reduced frustration and aggravation experienced by Postmasters and rural customers.

I realize that OPM may be concerned that this bill would set a precedent for others to follow. I can't see how. The Postal Service is unique. What other government entity serves customers six days a week in every tiny corner of America?

I understand that the Postal Service could request a waiver from OPM. Does OPM really want to deal with hundreds of cases nationwide, day-in and day-out, on a 24-hour (seven time zone) basis? Could they if they wanted to? Could they without interrupting mail delivery?

This bill offers a logical, sensible solution to a specialized but widely occurring problem. The problem affects quality of service and customer satisfaction. It also affects the morale of hardworking, efficient postmasters who are thwarted and frustrated when they cannot meet their own high standards.

The Postal Service has a commitment to providing on-time and quality service to every community in America, no matter how remote the location or sparse the population. This bill is necessary, because it can help alleviate temporary staffing problems in these communities by adding experienced, knowledgeable and proven individuals to the relief pool.

When our Postmasters talk about this bill, they say it would create a "win-win" situation: The Postal Service wins. The Postmaster wins. And, most of all, the postal customer wins.

On behalf of rural Postmasters, Rural Carriers and all of Rural America, the National League of Postmasters thanks you for your full support of this bill.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Brown, do you want to go next?

Mr. BROWN. My name is William R. Brown, Jr. I am the president of the 83,000 members of the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association.

If it would please the committee, I would like to submit for the record letters concerning the problem of leave replacements for our rural letter carriers across this country.

Ms. NORTON. So ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]

OFFICE OF THE STATE STEWARD,
CALIFORNIA RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION,
Simi Valley, CA, May 5, 1994.

WILLIAM R. BROWN, JR.,
President, *National Rural Letter Carriers' Association,*
Alexandria, VA.

DEAR PRESIDENT BROWN, In my position as State Steward for the state of California, my charge is nine Districts in the Pacific and Western areas. Las Vegas, San Diego, Long Beach, Santa Ana, Van Nuys, San Jose, Oakland, San Francisco, and Sacramento.

In virtually every District there have been RCA hire and retention problems. In fact, the horror stories in this regard have reached unprecedented proportions. Rural Carriers who have earned leave, are unable to use it! Carriers are working sick, when they should be able to see their doctors or recuperate at home, a mother of the bride is told she must work on her daughter's wedding day, another is told he may not be a pallbearer at his best friend's funeral, a grandson's graduation is missed, and another calls in tears, to tell me how she must cancel her trip for the birth of a granddaughter, as "there is no replacement for the route!" These are all telephone calls I have received in the last two years, never mind the Saturday Little League games or the family picnics missed . . . all under the guise of the fact that there is "no replacement for the route!"

The Postal Service has been derelict in its obligation to replenish and establish Rural Registers. The insensitivity to this craft in this area has been shameful, and in view of the NRLCA's cooperation with the Postal Service in so many areas the issue is unconscionable on the part of the service. How many of these District Managers make these types of sacrifices for their budgets, or have given up a memorable part of their lives as many of our craft have been forced to do? Many of our craft have had to work two and three months before even getting a relief day!

I am presently handling the case of a Rural Carrier who is out on stress and has filed a CA2. I am enclosing a copy of the Step 2, so you can see the nature of the grievance, also enclosed in a current additions and corrections letter on another issue. The enclosures are representative of some of the ramifications of "no RCA available."

President Brown, any attention you can bring to this long standing problem that is peculiar to this craft, would be greatly appreciated. The Rural Substitute is the key to the successful Rural unit! Is there enough time in your term to make a difference, in this crucial ongoing problem?

Sincerely,

BARBARA A. ELLIOTT.

OFFICE OF THE STATE STEWARD,
CALIFORNIA RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION,
Semi Valley, CA, May 5, 1994.

Re re-additions and Correction/Enclosures, Michael F. Barba grievance, Local MGM #R194.

JAMES RIVAS,
Postmaster, *San Luis Obispo, CA.*

DEAR SIR: I am making the following additions and corrections under Art. 15, 2A:f of the USPS/NRLCA National Agreement extended to 1995.

On Tuesday April 19, 1994 we met for a Step 2A discussion on the removal notice of Grievant Michael Barba. Mr. Barba is a 41 year old 22 year veteran of the Postal Service. AS this issue is non contractual, it is incumbent on the Service, the pressing party, to bear the burden of proof in this case, not the converse.

The existence of the enclosed documents was discussed, and referenced during our conversation. Due to the sensitive and private nature of their contents, they were not presented at that time. However, the Union's document of explanation by Grievant statement was exchanged and copied for your file. Mr. Barba's therapy/counseling had commenced concurrent with our meeting date, and no clinical evaluation or

prognosis had been completed or was available on that date. This was no stipulated in our conversation, and you were advised that this information would be forthcoming.

The Union countered the charge of irregular attendance and AWOL by pointing to the 3972, 4240's, the 1314 and the Master List AAQ300P1 for the relevant times. The 4240's indicated a condoned record of variable starting times for all employees, including others with as much as an hour variance.

The AWOL charge was issued for a Saturday, which is a K day, or Relief day. The RCA had requested the day off and Mr. Barba had agreed to work the day, but had overextended himself and was unable to keep his commitment.

The charge of previous AWOL (for three hours and eight minutes) in the letter of warning dated 6-26-92, was not supported with the examination of the 1314 or the 3972. Additionally, the Services' citing of that letter of 6-26-92 was out of order, as it violated Art. 16.8 of the National agreement which is to be noted, and will be added to the Step 2 form as discussed.

In defense of the two absences in June/July of 1993 during the 15 day period in which the Grievant was encountering traumatic personal problems, the lack of an assigned substitute for the route, as indicated by the Master List dated 6-25-93 precluded the Grievant from exercising his right to a day off for "personal wishes" (Art. 10.2A), and while advance leave may have been manageable, spot or emergency leave was not, and caused operational problems.

The suspension for these two days, (one 7 day suspension and one 14 day suspension) and the simultaneously issued letter of warning were not grieved, further attesting to Mr. Barba's state of mind during this period. Had there been grievance activity, the Union contends the discipline was defective (no citable past element, unprogressive, punitive, and in violation of the double jeopardy laws of the land), however the Union recognizes that this is after the fact.

As to the Grievant's avocation, management acknowledges Mr. Barba's involvement in the music industry, referencing a recording it had heard.

Also entered into the record, was that management had asked Mr. Barba to work the first day after his removal, is there was the possibility of an RCA problem.

The Articles of the USPS/NRLCA National Agreement violated were addressed at the Step 2A meeting.

They are:

15.1—Referenced and evidenced by USPS denial and rejection of Step 1 agreement offer.

16.1—Agreed discipline should be corrective, and that Grievant's welfare was a joint responsibility and concern.

16.4—See remedy, Step 2 Form.

16.6—Documents requested not received, again asked at meeting and Mr. Milby stated that he had not sent anything to Labor Relations, Postmaster Rivas was concurring official and did not offer any additional documents.

19—Handbooks, Manuals, Bulletins, etc.

The Union, at that time, being in agreement with the service's proposal of an entered into agreement between the Grievant and the USPS offered no other remedy under Article 15.3, Step 2A:c. In fact, the parties were in accord that the welfare of Mr. Barba was an obligation equally borne.

By this letter, as part of Article 15.3, Step 2A:c, I wish to state under Just Cause mitigations that even though Mr. Barba was guilty of not coming in on his relief day, after saying he would, the Union feels that removal from the Postal Service, and this period in a nonpay status, to be unreasonable, and far to severe of penalty for the infraction, and for someone who has served more than half of their life in the Postal Service.

Michael Barba is, and has been, attending the prescribed sessions with the EAP contractor, and has provided the previously referenced documents from his personal life to verify the Union's contentions.

The enclosed documents and release are presented for consideration prior to appeal to Step 2B of the grievance-arbitration process. At that time the remedy request as stated on the Step 2 Form shall prevail.

Sincerely,

BARBARA A. ELLIOTT.

THE NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION

These are some of the problems we have experienced in the Memphis Office with RCA's.

BARTLETT STATION RT7—46K

This is a problem that I experienced personally. My sub went regular in Jan., 1992. I went without a sub until June 29. A RCA was hired and I trained her for 1 week. She worked the route for 3 days by herself and quit. She said the route was too big and difficult. A sub was finally hired in Sept. 1993. I used other RCA's and city carriers to cover the route when I had to be away. There was always a large accumulation of mail whenever I returned.

BARTLETT STATION RT16—46K

This route was without a sub for almost 1 year. City carriers were used to cover the route on Saturday. A RCA was hired in Sept. 1993, after training for 3 days, the sub quit, saying the route was taking up more of his time than he thought it would. City carriers were again used until a emergency hire was assigned to the route in Nov. 93.

BARTLETT STATION RT53—48K

This route was without a sub for 7 months. The RCA had quit because of the size and difficulty of the route. City carriers were used to cover the route on Saturdays and on days when the regular had to be off. A RCA was hired in Sept. 1993, and worked for 4 months, but had a difficult time handling the volume and the size of the route. Mail accumulated and aux. assistance was constantly needed to help the sub. This sub resigned in Jan. 94, and city carriers were again used until an emergency hire was assigned in Feb. 94.

MALLORY STATION MEMPHIS

There are 3 routes at Mallory, 2-J's and 1-K. 1 RCA was assigned to the station for almost 1 year. The 2 J routes used the RCA by alternating their Saturday off days. City carriers were used to cover the K route on Saturdays. Mail accumulated on the K route as only 1st, 2nd classes and dailies were delivered.

RALEIGH STATION RT5

This route has been without a sub for almost 9 months. A RCA was hired, trained and quit after 2 weeks citing the route as being too difficult. City carriers have been used to carry the route on Sat. and on days the regular carrier has been off due to illness. This route experiences a lot of misdelivery complaints and a large backup of mail.

During this period of lack of RCA's, a Class Action Grievance was filed to get subs hired. We were told the register had been depleted because of the high number of persons who quit after going to the stations and seeing the high volume of mail. Also a lot of them complain about the difficulty of rural delivery. (A lot of them complained about having to drive and deliver from the passenger side of the vehicle).

At the present time we are having to use city carriers on Saturday to run the newly established routes and auxs. At Bartlett Station we have 21 routes and auxs. but only 13 rural persons to cover on Saturday until the new hires arrive in the middle of May.

Thank You,

THOMAS KEYS,
Carrier, Bartlett Station.

May 3, 1994.

Mr. BILL BROWN,

This is in regard to the Sawyer Bill.

The location is 320 East Grand Ave., Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494.

I had six subs between 1990-1994. Last sub has been with me since April 1993.

I don't have exact dates. Some of the reasons for leaving were one sub worked six months then decided to go back to school. One sub worked about 4 months and let go for being too slow. One sub worked December and January. Let go because she was to slow also. One sub took the training time, worked two Sat. for me, said she had to give it up for medical reasons, too stressful.

One took the training, was sent out for two half-days, told if he didn't get faster he would be let go. So he quit.

The one I have now is very good and been with me a year. But he drives about 45 miles just to get to work so he would like to transfer closer to home.

I am not sure how many days off I was denied. It was a few I just didn't ask for any after awhile. I have a K route so one year I had 14 K-days I carried over and the next year I had about the same. They finally trained one of the other RCA's in the office on my route. But she could only do every other Sat. because she works on a J route.

As far as the Supervisor, he has never carried the route.

As far as the mail being slowed down—a few of the subs never came back to the office until 7 or 8 p.m. It was winter and during Christmas. So the mail didn't go out on the truck. One time one sub was told just to quit delivering because it was so late. She brought back about 3 bundles of mail that she never delivered. A few Mondays I would come back in and have to take it out with me.

It takes anywhere between 8 and 14 weeks to get a sub and when they don't stay you have to start over.

BARBARA J. RHOADES.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE,
Ogema, WI, May 4, 1994.

BILL BROWN,
President, NRLCA, Alexandria, VA.

DEAR MR. BROWN: We have a specific example of a post office having a problem delivering a rural route when a retired carrier was available. It occurred when the RCA had an aneurysm in his eye. The regular carrier had recently retired and the RCA was delivering the route until his regular appointment and an RCA would be hired for his position. I was in the process of hiring an RCA, but the training had not been scheduled.

On Oct. 14, 1993, the RCA came back from his route saying he had an emergency and had to go to the doctor immediately. He could have severely damaged his eye if he had not gone immediately. I finished the route using the carrier's car that day.

When checking to get permission for the retired carrier to take the route the next day, I thought I had approval. Later the next morning, a call came saying there was no way to pay the retired carrier. We ended up showing the RCA working and reimbursing the retired carrier for taking the route one day.

I drove the route the following day and the RCA put mail in the boxes. He had a patch over his eye and was not able to drive himself. The following week, my RCA from the other route, plus a borrowed RCA from another office completed the route. I had to ride the route with the borrowed RCA to train him for one day.

I am an exempt Postmaster and did not get paid for the Saturday that I drove the route. My PMR worked in the office while I worked on the route during the week, using extra work hours.

Having the retired carrier available until an RCA was trained to cover this emergency would have been much easier for me as Postmaster.

SANDRA L. VOLKMANN,
Postmaster.

Port Orange Post Office.

Re Sawyer bill.

1. Difficulties hiring and keeping RCA's is a big problem in the Port Orange Station and Daytona Beach Mail Facility.

2 a. RCA's quit because they have no beforehand knowledge of what the job entails, the pressure to make your evaluated hours, lack of proper training on individual routes and having to be available every day till an hour specified by the supervisor in case of last minute call-in.

b. The time frame between an RCA quitting and the rehiring of a new RCA can be and has been as long as 6 to 9 months.

3. Even when carriers have given a vacation schedule to their supervisor well in advance, because the lack of RCA's to cover all routes, the approval is sometimes (quite often) not given until as little as 3 days before planned vacation.

4. In all the years I have had at the Port Orange Station, to my knowledge, a supervisor has never filled in for a carrier, even the 204 B. What will happen is pressure is put on RCA's to finish the route they are working on quickly or leave

all the bulk mail so they can get back to do another route, sometimes a route they have never worked.

5 a. Again using RCA unfamiliar with a route, having them leave all bulk mail for the next day. Thus having the regular carrier come in next day without help to clean up.

b. Having RCA carrying a K route leave bulk mail for the regular next day.

c. Having 2 or 3 RCA on a K route divide the vacated route to deliver.

JOAN CLERKIN.

Jonesboro, ME, April 14, 1994.

WILLIAM BROWN,
President, NRLCA,
Alexandria, VA.

DEAR MR. BROWN: I have been experiencing RCA difficulties since May of 1992. I am the only rural carrier (47K) in the Machias, ME (04654) Post Office. In May, 1992 my long-serving RCA transferred to a different state. My postmaster requested the hiring register immediately. After lengthy delays with the drug screening and other preliminaries, of the nine names on the register, four could be interviewed, and only three showed up for an interview. We began training the new hire in August.

Between May and August we borrowed two RCA's from neighboring offices. These employees had difficulties finishing the route and making dispatch because of their unfamiliarity with the route and casing methods. Once the newly hired RCA came aboard, he failed to finish the route his first three trips out and our office experienced an embarrassing article in the local newspaper. This RCA was separated during probation for poor performance and inattention to instructions. I had to go out on extended sick leave in mid-December, and in my absence we began using a borrowed RCA again. This however did not cover all of my absence and my postmaster was required to cover my route one day while two postal employees covered it on two other days.

During 1992 I had to work eleven of my relief days.

My postmaster requested the register in January of 1993. This time only one name appeared on it, and that person had an unsuitable driving record. No exams had been given in the interim and none were scheduled. We therefore had to make an emergency hire off-the-street. Even this expedient took a long time due to drug and driver screening, physicals, etc. The RCR hired finally came to the route in September.

During 1993 I had to work ten relief days. On three occasions, my route was covered by two employees (postmaster, clerks, & janitors), and on one occasion my route was covered by three; a borrowed RCA, a PTF clerk, and a janitor.

The exam was finally given in December 1993. However, the RCR resigned in March of 1994, and I am again without an assigned relief employee. My postmaster has again requested the register and we are getting by with a borrowed RCA.

Throughout this period, the customers on my route have experienced late delivery, sometimes no delivery, and occasional misdelivery of their mail. I attribute this to the low quality of relief employee we have been forced to use because of the lack of interested people and the inordinate delays in the hiring process. Without the great amount of understanding and patience on the part of my customers, and without the high level of cooperation from my postmaster and fellow employees, the situation would have been much worse.

MICHAEL W. ZIMMERMANN.

[From the Bangor Daily, Nov. 11, 1992]

DARKNESS HALTS MAIL DELIVERY IN MARSHFIELD

(By Paul Sylvain)

An inscription above the New York City Post Office boasts that "neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

Perhaps the adage still applies to mail deliveries in most of the United States, but not, it seems, in Marshfield, ZIP code 04654.

"Apparently they took the 'darkness' part out of it," Marshfield resident Ronald Tower Jr. laughingly said Tuesday. "I guess that part doesn't apply anymore."

Tower was told by two postal workers at the Machias Post Office, where mail is sorted for delivery to residents in Machias and surrounding towns, including Marshfield, that service along his route was suspended Saturday and Monday "on account of darkness."

The local mail wagon last made its "appointed rounds" through Marshfield on Friday. Tower said he probably wouldn't have noticed the lack of service if one of his daughters hadn't written a letter and placed it in his roadside postal box for pickup.

The small red flag on Tower's mailbox was raised Saturday morning as a signal for the rural carrier to stop and pick up the letter inside. The flag was still up Tuesday, like a forgotten sentry. As Tower noted, "Maybe they'll get to it today, before it gets dark."

Officials at the Machias Post Office explained Tuesday that the problem began Saturday when the mail delivery vehicle used on the Marshfield route had mechanical problems and broke down. The mail eventually was transferred to a second vehicle, but the driver was unable to complete the route before darkness set in.

Unfortunately for the hapless driver, the breakdown occurred on his first day driving that route.

Officials said that because the driver was unfamiliar with his new route, he was unable to complete the route before dark again Monday. Tower was told when he called the post office Tuesday that it got dark "before the carrier reached Marshfield."

Tower was assured that his daughter's letter would be picked up and the mail delivered in Marshfield on Tuesday. To back that up, two carriers had been assigned to the route that day.

As postal officials pointed out, the suspension of mail deliveries when darkness sets in late in the afternoon is a nationwide policy of the U.S. Postal Service. According to a spokesman at the Machias Post Office, the policy was set "for safety reasons."

Tower noted that mail used to be delivered at his home by early afternoon. Now, he sometimes doesn't receive his mail until nearly 4 p.m.

Gone are the days of the Pony Express, when mail riders worried more about Indian attacks, rustlers and bandits than a little darkness. But as Tower points out, there could be a simple solution:

"Maybe they need to raise the postage rates a little, so they can get some lights."

DISTRICT F OF THE KENTUCKY RURAL LETTER CARRIERS ASSOCIATION,
Bedford, KY, April 30, 1994.

BILL BROWN,
President, N.R.L.C.A.,
Alexandria, VA.

DEAR BILL, In regard to the Sawyer Bill I am writing you to tell about an example about 15 miles from me in Eminence, Ky. a two route office.

It has been hard to keep any RCA's for some time. They quit for various reasons. The two routes had been sharing one RCA for some time and the first Monday in Oct. of 1993 the RCA quit.

They went till the middle of March trying to hire one and there was no one left on the list, so they hired a emergency hire which was the lady that did the cleaning of the office. She was trained on Rt. one and is to start training on Rt. 3 Monday. The route three carrier has not been off a day since first of Oct. last year. The Post Master carried Rt. one, once in Jan. and twice in Feb.

The Rt. three carrier has only been a regular about one year and from what I can find out did not want to make waves and never did ask the Post Master to carry for him.

The emergency hire went to take the test Thursday and I have not talked to her as of yet, but the carrier on Rt. 1 said she is doing a fine job and they sure hope she will be able to be made a RCA if she passed the test.

Sincerely,

BOB WEBB.

PS.—Thank Scottie for me for being so prompt in calling me in regard to the relief day being on Wed., in the case that came up last week.

Valparaiso, IN.

This is in response to the letter sent to me regarding the Sawyer Bill.

I am employed at the Valparaiso, Indiana (46383) Post Office. We have 23 full time routes (Rural) and no auxiliary. One of those routes has not had a regular carrier (due to retirement) since last December and it does not have an assigned RCA. Six additional routes also do not have assigned RCA's. The longest a route has been without an RCA is our only 'J' route, which has not had one in over two years. The shortest time is just a few months when our one auxiliary route became a regular route due to growth.

Although the test has been given for RCA's, we do not yet have a hiring work sheet. Six weeks ago we tried to process some people in as Emergency Hires but they are being held up with red tape.

I will attempt to fully answer the five issues put forth on the yellow paper sent to me. I am the Union Steward at this office.

(1) Both Valparaiso and St. John, Indiana seem to have trouble getting and keeping RCA's. I believe the main problem is that the Post Office doesn't offer them enough to keep them interested. Working one day a week doesn't pay the bills, and the Post Office prefers that you are always on-call if needed, which prevents a person from getting a second job. The second main problem, and maybe equally as great as the first reason, is treatment of RCA's by the regular carriers. They always have their 'subs' work the day after to holiday and the days they know are heavy, and subsequently a sub works 12 hours for 9 or 10 hours pay. Week after week that all adds up to a lot of free time. And of the sub doesn't clean up' the route, they get talked down to by the regular, even if the regular doesn't have the route cleaned up the day before.

No benefits.

(2) I find that most RCA's quit because they got a better job offer elsewhere. Also, treatment by a regular carrier has convinced some to quit. It just isn't worth it sometime. In the past two years, we have had only three new hires, and two of those resigned. One because of treatment by the regular and the other was asked to resign because he didn't show up most of the time when scheduled. He had another job that interfered with his Post Office scheduled. As I said before, out of 23 routes, 7 do not have assigned subs.

(3) Management so far has been able to work out a schedule where no one is not able to take leave. Sometimes it does mean two subs on three routes (their own and then they split doing the other one). This again makes for a long day for the subs. This happens mostly on Saturdays, Mondays, and day after the holidays.

(4) One day before Christmas a regular called off when all subs had been scheduled on other routes. There was no one available. A woman who had her own route to do (this was a day after the holiday)—must have been Thanksgiving cased on the vacant route and the Rural Supervisor and acting Postmaster carried the route. They were not at all familiar with the area and it being a real country route with boxes not properly labeled they got back at 7 pm with only about half of the route carried.

In January, during a spell of really bad weather, on a Saturday, the sub that was scheduled called in sick and we could not reach the regular carrier. That day the route was not even attempted to be cased or carried. The only supervisor in the Post Office that day could not do anything because she was also responsible for the clerks and city carriers.

(5) We are not getting any automated mail—not even two-pass, so that casing time takes a lot longer for someone not familiar with that route. Also, the majority of our routes are overburdened. Routes are supposed to be getting out and adjusted, but that seems a long time down the road. The growth in this area is unbelievable.

GERTRUDE LEE.

Springfield, AR, May 1, 1994.

DEAR PRESIDENT BROWN: I am Barbara Bradley, CDCP, for District 2 in State of Arkansas.

District 2 has 8 counties, 90 post offices with 42 of these offices with routes.

In responding to your request concerning the Tom Sawyer bill, I mailed out the enclosed questionnaires and addressed them to the local steward or RR 1 carrier. I received 21 responses out of 42 mailing.

Enclosed are the answers from 5 offices with problems in this area on 11 different routes.

I hope this helps and gives you the information you need.

Sincerely,

BARBARA BRADLEY,
CDCP, Dist. 2, AR.

1. Name of Post Office: Central Ridge. Address: Center Ridge, AR 72027-9998. County: Conway.

2. Has there been any routes in your office where there has been a lot of difficulties hiring and keeping RCAs to fill in for the regular carrier?

Answer. Yes.

If yes what are the route numbers? No. 1.

3. Tell us why the RCAs quite and how long a period it was before new RCAs were hired. We need this information for each route with a problem.

Answer. Route 1. RCA quit because she couldn't get around the route and because she didn't think it was as hard as it was to run the route. That was on Jan. 17, 1994. The replacement for RCA was hired the first part of April 1994.

4. Give us examples where due to a lack of RCAs the regular carrier was not able to utilize his/her vacation time or sick leave.

Answer. From Sept. 1993 we have been without a RCA in the office. We had one on loan from Springfield AR, from Sept. to April to fill in between the carriers at Springfield and Center Ridge and from May 1993 the RCA had the relief. RCA in Springfield to sub at Center Ridge, the regular carriers was O.I.C. at this time.

5. Give us examples of supervisors filling in for carriers (how often this happened and what effect it had)

Answer. The only time the Postmaster has filled in was when the regular carrier was on detail as O.I.C. and the sub was in a QAL/E1 class in Jacksonville, AK, the carrier got sick and the postmaster had to run the route. She only took out the first class mail and only put the mail on the boxes and didn't go down any side roads.

6. Any thing at all that slowed down the flow of mail due to a lack of experienced RCAs who could fill in for the regular carrier.

Answer. So far the mail has been out and back in before dispatch.

1. Name of Post Office: Benton. Address: 322 N. Market St., 72015. County: Saline.

2. Has there been any routes in your office where there has been a lot of difficulties hiring and keeping RCAs to fill in for the regular carrier?

Answer. Yes.

If yes what are the route numbers? No. 10, 11, 12.

3. Tell us why the RCAs quite and how long a period it was before new RCAs were hired. We need this information for each route with a problem.

Answer. (11 and 10) RCA's couldn't make it all the way around the route including assign time with out help. Several weeks in between new RCA's each time.

(12) Has never had on RCA for a relief day—it is an auxiliary route.

4. Give us examples where due to a lack of RCAs the regular carrier was not able to utilize his/her vacation time or sick leave.

Answer. Several times for each of these routes, but usually a carrier from another route would try to loan their own RCA to that route.

5. Give us examples of supervisors filling in for carriers (how often this happened and what effect it had)

Answer. Never! They will make a regular carrier work and loan their sub or RCA to that route that doesn't have anyone to work.

6. Any thing at all that slowed down the flow of mail due to a lack of experienced RCAs who could fill in for the regular carrier.

Answer. Yes, we have had to leave a lot of BBM in order to get most of the route served. There have been instances where carriers (RCA's) couldn't get around the entire route.

1. Name of Post Office: Jacksonville, AR 72076. Address: Main St. County: Palaski.

2. Has there been any routes in your office where there has been a lot of difficulties hiring and keeping RCAs to fill in for the regular carrier?

Answer. Yes.

If yes what are the route numbers? Nos. 1, 2, 5.

3. Tell us why the RCAs quite and how long a period it was before new RCAs were hired. We need this information for each route with a problem.

Answer. Different reasons. All took three months or so.

4. Give us examples where due to a lack of RCAs the regular carrier was not able to utilize his/her vacation time or sick leave.

Answer. All were inconvenienced.

1. Name of Post Office: Conway. Address: Federal Bldg. Conway AR 72032. County: Faulkner.

2. Has there been any routes in your office where there has been a lot of difficulties hiring and keeping RCAs to fill in for the regular carriers?

Answer. If yes what are the route numbers? Nos. 5, 10, 12, 13.

3. Tell us why the RCAs quite and how long a period it was before new RCAs were hired. We need this information for each route with a problem.

Answer. Each route—insufficient pay and benefits, overburdened routes.

4. Give us examples where due to a lack of RCAs the regular carrier was not able to utilize his/her vacation time or sick leave.

Answer. Carrier Rt. 12 worked 4 days sick and injured due to no sub or available backup. Carrier Rt. 13 went over a year without a sub.

5. Give us examples of supervisors filling in for carriers (how often this happened and what effect it had)

Answer. Never, Ever, unheard of.

6. Any thing at all that slowed down the flow of mail due to a lack of experienced RCAs who could fill in for the regular carrier.

Answer. Insufficient training time and lack of backups slow delivery. It is also common for one RCA to have to carry two routes on same day due to no RCA hired for second route.

1. Name of Post Office: Danville Post Office. Address: Danville 72833. County: Yell.

2. Has there been any routes in your office where there has been a lot of difficulties hiring and keeping RCAs to fill in for the regular carriers?

Answer. No.

3. Tell us why the RCAs quite and how long a period it was before new RCAs were hired. We need this information for each route with a problem.

Answer. No problem.

4. Give us examples where due to a lack of RCAs the regular carrier was not able to utilize his/her vacation time or sick leave.

Answer. Only problem National Guard Drill and 4 weeks coming up this summer. Postmaster picks when I take off.

5. Give us examples of supervisors filling in for carriers (how often this happened and what effect it had)

Answer. None.

NEW JERSEY
Rural Letter Carriers Association
28220 SCHOOLHOUSE RD, COLUMBUS, NJ 08022-1828

Rural Relief Shortage

Prepared by
JOHN J. AMTSFIELD
STATE STEWARD

for
NEW JERSEY RLCA STATE BOARD
AND
USPS, CUSTOMER SERVICES DISTRICTS

APRIL 1994

April 9, 1994

NATURE OF CONCERN

- 1.....DISTRICT WIDE SHORTAGE OF RURAL ROUTE RELIEF EMPLOYEES.
- 2.....LONG LEAD TIME TO HIRE AND PLACE REPLACEMENT EMPLOYEES.
- 3.....SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYEE TURNOVER.
- 4.....SUBS IN SOME CASES DICTATING POLICY TO MANAGERS AND REGULAR CARRIERS.
- 5.....SERIOUS IMPACT ON REGULAR CARRIERS AND ON OPERATIONS.
 - A.....LACK OF CONTRACTUAL AUXILIARY ASSISTANCE FOR OVERBURDENED ROUTES.
 - B.....2080 CONSIDERATIONS, WHEN 2080 PRINTOUTS COME OUT IMMINENTLY, OFFICES AND DISTRICT WILL OVERREACT DUE TO HIGH MAIL VOLUMES, ADVERSE WEATHER, SHORTAGE OF SUBS, BUFFERED OVERBURDENED ROUTES, ETC.
 - C.....REGULAR CARRIERS BEING ILLEGALLY REQUIRED TO WORK THEIR SCHEDULED RELIEF DAY WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT.
 - D.....ROUTES ARE BEING PIVOTED AND WORK FROM RELIEF DAYS IS BEING CARRIED OVER WITH THE REGULAR CARRIER BEING ILLEGALLY REQUIRED TO DO THE EXTRA WORK WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AND/OR AUXILIARY ASSISTANCE.
 - E.....REGULAR CARRIERS BEING DENIED LEAVE AND IN SOME CASES FORFEITING LEAVE FOR EXCEEDING THE ANNUAL CARRYOVER.
 - F.....RCAs PIVOTING ROUTES REQUIRED TO WORK MORE THAN 1 ROUTE SOMETIMES WITHOUT ADEQUATE COMPENSATION, BUT THAT THEY ARE BEING COMPELLED TO DO MORE THAN A DAY'S NORMAL WORK IN ONE DAY.
- 6.....DUE TO SHORTAGES, SUBS ARE IN SOME CASES DICTATING SCHEDULES BASED ON THEIR BARGAINING POWER AS A RARE COMMODITY AND MANAGERS ARE ALLOWING THIS TO HAPPEN TO PREVENT SUBS FROM LEAVING.
- 7.....THE UNION HAS BEEN COMPILED INFORMATION FOR A CLASS ACTION GRIEVANCE TO SEEK RESOLUTION TO THE CRISIS SHORTAGE.

EVERYTHING CURRENTLY IS BEING DONE TO DISCOURAGE MANAGERS FROM HIRING AND PROCESSING NEW HIRES AND NEW APPLICANTS FROM APPLYING; WE NEED TO MAKE A CONCERTED AND CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO COMPLETELY TURN THAT AROUND SO THAT MANAGERS ARE ENCOURAGED WITH POSITIVE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE AND THAT APPLICANTS DO NOT FEEL LIKE CANNON FODDER.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS THAT BEAR RELATION TO OVERALL CONCERN

1.....GAMES PLAYED BY HUMAN RESOURCES.

A.....Each District is required to keep an employee complement total that depending on the prevailing winds from Headquarters or Area Offices can allow for hiring or for freezes and/or pauses. These hiring strategies bear little relation to staffing requirements within districts and are therefore artificially imposed.

B.....The USPS/NRLCA Collective Bargaining Agreement obligates USPS to fill vacancies for regular carriers and to hire relief employees for each route. This establishes a contractual obligation for adequate staffing representing a regular carrier and a relief employee for each regular route. This contractual requirement is at direct odds with periodic freezes on hiring and with aggressive attempts to control employee complement numbers.

C.....Oftentimes associate offices carry employees on rolls who are no longer employed simply because a form 50 was never cut to remove the employee from the rolls. In these cases, the offices list employees who no longer exist. While the Union agrees in principle that employees can be kept on the rolls for up to 30 days to clear payroll obligations, associate offices must take positive steps to eliminate "ghost" employees.

D.....Delays in hiring cannot be attributable to playing shell games with the employee complement. If rural staffing needs require it, a District is going to have to take lumps in Employee Complement in order to meet contractual obligations.

E.....The practice of listing a dual classification employee as two employees is absurd and has to end. It is an artificial aberration for the computer system that simply needs a program edit.

2.....LONG DELAYS AND LAG TIME IN HIRING RELIEF EMPLOYEES.

A.....The turnaround time for hiring a relief employee from the time an employee is identified until he/she is available in the local office for work must be shortened. In some cases the time can be as long as four to five months. This sets up a situation wherein an employee applies for a part-time job for normally one day a week, must go through an exhaustive barrage of pre-screening hurdles much like a candidate for the FBI and then wait while all of the various pre-screening requirements are processed. What employee in their right minds is going to wait that long for a job one day a week.

B.....Everytime a incident of violence occurs, the pre-screening is tightened. Applicants for relief positions must undergo a physical examination and drug screening, they must have a driver abstract evaluated on their driving record from each state they have been licensed in over up to a five year period, they must have a criminal record check with both local and state police, and a check on references. All of this before they are hired and then they must undergo a probationary period of 90 days worked which normally lasts for a full year since most subs do not work every day. During the probationary period, these new employees do not have access to the grievance procedure in almost all cases and are therefore subject to termination for almost any reason. USPS has all of the opportunities in the world prior to hiring and after hiring for up to one year to determine employee suitability. The fact of the matter is that some postmasters would be willing to hire "Jack the Ripper" if he showed up for work on his scheduled days.

C.....USPS loves bureaucracy. In order to hire a sub, postmasters must first get approval for same from Post Office Operations Manager. This added approval step adds time and another unnecessary level to the hiring procedure. Although I am not aware of any requests being rejected, such rejection in most cases would be a violation of the USPS-NRLCA National Collective Bargaining Agreement

D.....There is no set procedure in place for processing new hires with any degree of efficiency. As a result of the reorganization contract medical units have been largely eliminated and the personnel staffs have been reduced to levels wherein the they are called on to do the same amount of work they couldn't do times before with less people. The GIS program has been to date a nightmare, but I am informed that logistical problems are projected to be ironed out by May 6, 1994 wherein the private firm will be caught up and current with processing requests. At times, applicants scheduled for physical examinations have had to report two and three times to complete a physical, turnaround times on driver abstracts particularly from other states can be lengthy.

E.....Some Managers, Trainers and PEDC personnel think they are doing new hires a service by telling them they get no benefits and that they are in effect "the lowest form of crawling life". All of this is very counter-productive. The way to sell a position with limited benefits and a lot of drawbacks is not to ignore the benefits and stress the disadvantages. It does not help an employee's morale to be told "Welcome to the Postal Service, from this day forward, you are horse manure and don't you forget it."

F.....The hiring procedures are tedious and time consuming and Postmasters do not like all of the work and aggravation necessary to do it properly particularly when they have to do it several times for the same vacancy over and over again. In the past several years, shortcuts in the hiring procedures allowed them to pick up emergency hires and recycle them endlessly. Unfortunately, since this was designed to be a stopgap, it was the employees who paid a heavy price when the hourly rate for RCAs changed in August of 1991 and when edits were put into the data system to eliminate these employees in July of 1993. Even the current practice of hiring a designation 75W, emergency hire for the last six months of 1993, recycling them into the first 6 months of 1994 is stretching the intent of the authority to hire emergency hires when a register is exhausted. Postmasters have circumvented the civil service law in hiring emergency hires and then trying to pull strings to get the 75Ws converted to RCAs. The simple truth of the matter is that special in-service tests given only to RCRs is illegal; it bypasses civil service regulations and veterans preference laws. Up to now, the hiring of 75W RCRs was regarded by the Postmasters as an alternative method of hiring and it was sanctioned and even encouraged by the union to fill the vacancies. Everyone failed to realize that hiring a 75W did not absolve the responsibility of hiring a 78 RCA once a register was established. The term of employment for a 75W was never intended to be a contract. The 75W was hired for up to 180 days or until a register was established so that an RCA could be hired. The confusion existed because pre-1986 RCRs were guaranteed their positions and could not be bumped by an RCA; no such guarantee applies for 75Ws or RCRs hired after 1986. Although many effectively worked for three or four years without interruption their positions were in jeopardy every single day because their postmasters were contractually obligated to request a hiring register once one was available and the District was obligated by regulations to establish a register once one was exhausted.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TURNING AROUND RCR/RCA SHORTAGE

I.....DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITY

1.....ESTABLISH REGULAR TEST CYCLES EVERY 90 DAYS IN EACH TESTING ZONE. THIS WILL CONSTANTLY REPLENISH REGISTERS AND IT WILL GIVE RCRS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONVERSION TO RCA. IT WILL ALSO GO A LONG WAY TO REESTABLISHING CONFIDENCE OF POSTMASTERS THAT THERE IS A POOL OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES TO DRAW FROM.

2.....MAINTAIN OPEN REGISTERS SO THAT APPLICATIONS ARE ACCEPTED FOR EACH TESTING CYCLE. ENSURE THAT TEST APPLICATION FORMS ARE ON HAND IN EACH POST OFFICE AND THAT TESTS AND PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND FORECASTS ARE WELL PUBLICIZED BY POSTERS IN POST OFFICE LOBBIES.

3.....ESTABLISH A SCREENING PROCESS PRIOR TO TESTING SO THAT APPLICANTS SCREEN THEMSELVES. THE OBJECTIVE IS TO GIVE POTENTIAL APPLICANTS A REALISTIC PICTURE OF JOB PROSPECTS SO THAT ONLY THE SERIOUS APPLICANTS ARE TESTED AND GO THROUGH THE HIRING PROCESS, THIS WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD REESTABLISHING POSTMASTER CONFIDENCE IN THE HIRING PROCEDURE.

A.....THE SCREENING ANNOUNCEMENT DEVELOPED BY MBP THAT IS READ TO APPLICANTS PRIOR TO TESTING NEEDS TO BE REPLACED. THE INTENTIONS ARE GOOD, BUT IT FALLS SHORT OF THE MARK AND ESPECIALLY REGARDING MANUAL SHIFT VEHICLES IS PARTIALLY INACCURATE. THE ANNOUNCEMENTS SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH THE SCREENING OF A FILM THAT WAS PUT TOGETHER BY USPS AND THE NRLCA JOINTLY TO GIVE RELIEF EMPLOYEES AN ACCURATE PORTRAYAL OF THE JOB. TWO EXCELLENT EXAMPLES OF THESE FILMS ARE "A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RURAL CARRIER" AND "THIS JOB'S FOR YOU". EACH FILM RUNS APPROXIMATELY 7-8 MINUTES AND THEY ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE PEDC. SOME DISTRICTS THAT UTILIZE THESE FILMS FIND THAT BY SHOWING THEM 60-75% OF PEOPLE GET UP AND LEAVE; BUT THAT IS WHAT WE NEED TO DO IS SCREEN OUT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT SERIOUS AND WOULD COST MONEY UNNECESSARILY. APPLICANTS NEED TO BE FULLY INFORMED THAT ALMOST ALL HIRING IS INITIALLY DONE AS PART-TIME HIRING FROM WHICH THE POSSIBILITY OF FULL TIME EMPLOYMENT CAN RESULT.

B.....APPLICANTS NEED TO BE GIVEN A PACKAGE OR INFORMATION AT THE TIME THEY EXPRESS AN INTEREST THAT IS REALISTIC. THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF POSTAL WORK IS THAT IT IS VERY HIGHLY PAID FOR VERY LITTLE WORK AND THAT IS A HUGE WAKEUP CALL FOR MOST PEOPLE WHEN THEY FIND OUT THE WORK CAN BE DEMANDING AND THE PAY IF ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO THE WORK DONE. APPLICANTS NEED TO REALIZE THAT IF THEY ARE OFFERED A JOB IT IS PART-TIME AND THEY HAVE NOT WON THE LOTTERY.

C.....APPLICANTS DURING TEST TAKING NEED TO BE GIVEN KEYS TO CHOOSING OFFICES AND/OR REGISTERS SO THAT APPLICANTS DO NOT CHOOSE OFFICES WHERE ADVANCEMENT AND/OR HIRING OPPORTUNITIES ARE SEVERELY LIMITED, BUT RATHER CHOOSE A CROSS-SECTION OF OPPORTUNITIES.

D.....APPLICANTS NEED TO HAVE A PACKAGE OF INFORMATION THAT ADDRESSES MOST OF THE CONCERNs THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE AND ANSWERS QUESTIONS. A RESOURCE PERSON SHOULD BE LISTED TO ANSWER ANY OTHER QUESTIONS.

4.....SERIOUS ATTENTION NEEDS TO BE DEVOTED TO MINIMIZE THE TURNAROUND TIME FOR HIRING. ONCE ADEQUATE REGISTERS ARE ESTABLISHED, BASED ON HIRING PROJECTIONS EACH QUARTER, TEN APPLICANTS

SHOULD BE PRE-SCREENED FOR EACH HIRING VACANCY IDENTIFIED FOR THE QUARTER. AS THE REGISTERS IMPROVE WITH INTERESTED CANDIDATES THE NUMBER OF PRE-SCREENED APPLICANTS CAN BE REDUCED FOR EACH PROJECTED VACANCY. SINCE THE PRE-SCREENINGS ARE ONLY GOOD FOR 90 DAYS, THIS HAS TO BE A CONTINUOUS CYCLE THAT IS MODIFIED EACH QUARTER BY PAY PERIODS IF HIRING VACANCIES AND REQUESTS EXCEED PROJECTIONS.

5.....AGGRESSIVE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS NEED TO BE MADE. APPLICANTS WHO MAKE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A....LOCAL PEOPLE WHO DO NOT HAVE FAR TO TRAVEL, CHESTER HAS HAD SUCH A LARGE TURNOVER BECAUSE THEY HAVE HAD TO HIRE PEOPLE FROM GREAT DISTANCES.

B.....PEOPLE WHO NEED THE EXTRA INCOME AS A SUPPLEMENT TO CURRENT INCOME, SUCH AS SECOND AND THIRD SHIFT WORKERS, HOMEMAKERS, SELF-EMPLOYED PEOPLE, ETC.

C.....PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKING FOR ADVANCEMENT AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AS A LONG RANGE OBJECTIVE.

RECRUITMENT NEEDS TO BE TARGETED TO THESE PEOPLE AND SHOULD INCLUDE ATTRACTIVE LOBBY POSTERS IN EACH POST OFFICE FOR EACH TESTING ZONE. PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS IN NEWSPAPERS AND ON RADIO. RECRUITMENT THROUGH STATE UNEMPLOYMENT, FARMERS ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE GRANGE, HOSPITALS AND FACTORIES THAT WORK AROUND THE CLOCK, ETC. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, FIRE COMPANIES AND EVEN SUPERMARKET BULLETIN BOARDS.

6.....CONSCIENTIOUS EFFORTS MUST BE MADE TO ENSURE THAT REGISTERS ARE AVAILABLE FOR EVERY OFFICE AND THAT ONCE EXHAUSTED A REGISTER IS REPLENISHED EXPEDITIOUSLY. POSTMASTERS NEED TO BE ABLE TO HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT WHEN A VACANCY OCCURS, A POOL OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES THAT ARE INTERESTED IN AN RCA POSITION IS AVAILABLE. POSTMASTER CONFIDENCE IN THE REGISTERS IS CRUCIAL.

7.....THE HIRING PACKAGES POSTMASTERS USE FOR HIRING NEED TO BE REWORKED SO THAT EACH STEP IS LAID OUT AND STANDARDIZED AND THAT THE ENTIRE PROCESS IS SIMPLIFIED. POSTMASTERS NEED TO BE DISCOURAGED FROM HIRING 75W RCRS EXCEPT IN TRULY EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND THEY NEED TO BE INFORMED OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IF THEY DO NEED TO HIRE A 75W. REMEMBER, IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT AFTER HIRING AN 75W, THE POSTMASTER'S NATURAL INCLINATION WILL BE TO PROTECT THAT EMPLOYEE ESPECIALLY IF THEY ARE A GOOD EMPLOYEE.

8.....ATTENTION NEEDS TO BE FOCUSED TOWARD THE RURAL TRAINING ACADEMIES. WHEN THE ORIENTATION FOR RURAL EMPLOYEES WAS SEPARATED FROM GENERAL POSTAL ORIENTATION, THAT WAS A MAJOR POSITIVE STEP SINCE MOST OF THE ORIENTATION WAS GEARED TOWARD NON-RURAL EMPLOYEES AND WAS THEREFORE NOT APPLICABLE. HOWEVER, THE GENERAL POSTAL ORIENTATION WAS CONSOLIDATED INTO THE STANDARD THREE DAY RURAL TRAINING AND THAT NECESSITATED COMPACTING THE MANDATED THREE DAY COURSE. CURRENTLY THE THREE DAY COURSE AND HALF DAY ORIENTATION ARE COMBINED INTO THREE DAYS OF INSTRUCTION WHICH HAS NECESSITATED THE REDUCTION OF MANDATED COURSE MATERIAL AND IN SOME CASES ELIMINATION. THE ACADEMIES ARE DOING A COMMENDABLE JOB BUT ARE UNDERUTILIZED. THE ACADEMIES NEED TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN ON-THE-JOB TRAINING AND IN REFRESHER TRAINING. TO DATE ANY REFRESHER TRAINING THAT IS DONE IS MOSTLY TO DOCUMENT RETRAINING FOR DISCIPLINE AND/OR REMOVAL AND IT NEEDS TO BE REFOCUSSED POSITIVELY.

9.....DISTRICT PERSONNEL SHOULD BE MORE INVOLVED IN THE RURAL TRAINING CURRICULUM AND AS A PART OF THE TRAINING.

II...POSTMASTERS AND LOCAL OFFICES

1.....TIME NEEDS TO BE DEVOTED FOR A JOINT DISTRICT-UNION PRESENTATION ON PROPER HIRING PROCEDURES AND PLACEMENT PROCEDURES, PROPER ROLE OF A 75W RCR, UPGRADED LOCAL TRAINING AND ORIENTATION, MAKING SURE THAT RCR/RCA's KNOW CLEARLY HOW THEY ARE BEING PAID AND WHAT THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE.

2.....POSTMASTERS NEED TO BE MADE AWARE OF THE CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION TO FILL VACANCIES, TO CLEAR EMPLOYEES THAT ARE NO LONGER WORKING AND TO PROPERLY ASSIGN AND CREDIT DESIGNATION 74 AND 79 EMPLOYEES, THAT IS RCAS SERVING AN AUXILIARY ROUTE OR AS LEAVE REPLACEMENT ON A VACANT ROUTE OR WHERE THE CARRIER IS ON EXTENDED LEAVE OVER 90 DAYS.

3.....THERE MUST BE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT MADE TO BALANCE THE APPROACH TO RELIEF EMPLOYEES. THEY CANNOT DICTATE POLICY OR WORK SCHEDULES, BUT THEY ARE VALUABLE EMPLOYEES WITH BENEFITS.

4.....A SIGNIFICANT EFFORT HAS TO BE MADE TO BALANCE WORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONTRACT. THE CONTRACT SAYS THAT ASSIGNED WORK GOES TO THE ASSIGNED SUB, BUT IF NOT AVAILABLE A SUB CAN WORK ON UP TO THREE ROUTES. WORK ASSIGNMENTS NEED TO BE BALANCES BASED ON A MATRIX OF PRIMARY ROUTE ASSIGNMENTS AND SECONDARY AND TERTIARY ASSIGNMENTS; SO THAT SENIOR SUBS DO NOT END UP WITH ALL OF THE WORK AND JUNIOR SUBS WITH NONE IN LARGER OFFICES.

5.....DESPERATELY NEEDED SUBS CANNOT BE THROWN TO THE WOLVES BASED ON OPERATIONAL EXIGENCIES. SUBS CANNOT BE THROWN ON A ROUTE WITHOUT TRAINING AND/OR ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION; MOST WILL RUN FOR THE HILLS AND/OR THEIR LIVES IF IT HAPPENS ONCE LET ALONE FREQUENTLY. SOME OFFICES HAVE TERMINATED NEW SUBS ON THE FIRST DAY AND MANY EXPECT A BRAND NEW EMPLOYEE TO BE ROUTE SEASONED ENOUGH TO CARRY A ROUTE ALONE ON THE SECOND DAY. NEW EMPLOYEES NEED TO BE ALLOWED SOME TIME TO LEARN A ROUTE WITHOUT UNDUE PRESSURE, BUT NOR SHOULD THEY BE KEPT FOR 6-9 MONTHS IF THEY CAN ONLY DO HALF A ROUTE.

6.....POSTMASTERS NEED TO UTILIZE RELIEF EMPLOYEES TO FURNISH AUXILIARY ASSISTANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONTRACT TO PROVIDE EXTRA WORK OPPORTUNITIES AND ALSO TO ENCOURAGE THE COMPLETION OF WORK BY RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYEES. SUBS THAT ARE UNABLE TO COMPLETE A DAYS WORK, CANNOT OBLIGATE A REGULAR CARRIER TO CARRY THE SLACK WITHOUT ASSISTANCE AND/OR ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION.

7.....POSTMASTERS NEED TO REALIZE THAT AN EMPLOYEE'S INABILITY TO DO HIS/HER JOB OR TO LEARN RESPONSIBILITIES IS A REFLECTION ON THE MANAGER. USPS HAS AN OBLIGATION UNDER REGULATIONS TO PROVIDE TRAINING AS NEEDED AND TO TAKE CORRECTIVE MEASURES BEFORE RESORTING TO DISCIPLINE. OFFICES THAT HAVE A VERY HIGH TURNOVER OR WHO REMOVE SUBS QUICKLY STICK OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB AND THE PERCEPTIONS ARE NOT FLATTERING.

III...JOINT USPS-NRLCA EFFORTS

1.....SOME OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL REQUIRE LEG WORK THAT THE DISTRICT IS INCAPABLE OF ABSORBING WITH CURRENT STAFF. THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS THAT THIS WORK CAN BE DONE.

A.....UTILIZING QWL/EI WORKTEAMS TO DO SOME OF THE PACKAGES WITH OVERSIGHT BY THE UNION AND DISTRICT.

B.....UTILIZING JOINT MANAGER/RURAL CARRIER TASK TEAMS ON ASSIGNMENT TO SET EVERYTHING UP AND DO SOME OF THE CO-ORDINATING WORK BETWEEN THE QWL/EI WORKTEAMS, DISTRICT STAFF, POSTMASTERS AND EMPLOYEES. A TWO PERSON TEAM COULD SET EVERYTHING UP IN A MINIMUM AMOUNT OF TIME AND THEN FINE TUNE AS NECESSARY. THE TIME INVOLVED COULD BE MINIMAL AND IT WOULD BE COST EFFECTIVE, IF A LOT OF THESE EFFORTS FREED UP DISTRICT PERSONNEL AND MANAGERS FROM HAVING TO DEVOTE SO MUCH TIME TO SAME.

2.....A JOINT EFFORT TO ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE. TO IMPROVE ESPECIALLY THE COSMETIC FEATURES OF THE RELIEF JOB. IDENTIFYING REASONS FOR HIGH TURNOVER AND ATTEMPTING TO INTERCEDE IN OFFICES WITH A HIGH TURNOVER. IF SUBS ARE LEAVING FOR REASONS THAT ARE EASILY CORRECTABLE SHAME ON ALL OF US FOR IGNORING THOSE SYMPTOMS.

3.....EFFORTS TO PUBLICIZE ACCESS TO UNION SPONSORED INSURANCE THAT IS COMPETITIVE WITH REGULAR INSURANCE COMPANIES WITHOUT THE COMMERCIAL RATES, VIA NATIONAL GENERAL INSURANCE CO. CURRENTLY, THE RATES ARE SO ATTRACTIVE THAT NEW JERSEY LEADS THE NATION IN PARTICIPATION BY RURAL CARRIERS IN THE PLAN WITH 70% INVOLVEMENT. NEW RELIEF EMPLOYEES NEED TO BE AWARE OF THIS.

4.....HONEST AND OPEN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE UNION AND USPS.

5.....A JOINT RESOLUTION TO IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS AND THE BENEFIT LEVELS FOR RCAs WITHIN THE CONTRACTUAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK AVAILABLE.

6.....MAXIMIZATION OF LOCAL EFFORTS TO DEVELOP DIAL-A-SUB PROGRAMS THAT SHARE SUBS BETWEEN OFFICES. THIS MAXIMIZES WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUBS, IN FACT SOME SUBS ARE MAKING A VERY GOOD LIVING WORKING IN TWO OR MORE OFFICES.

7.....LEGITIMATE EFFORTS TO INVOLVE RELIEF EMPLOYEES IN QWL/EI AND TO DEMONSTRATE HOW VALUABLE THE EMPLOYEES ARE TO THE USPS.

IV.....NEW HIRE EMPLOYEES

1.....NEED GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE IN NAVIGATING THE COMPLICATED PROCEDURES RELATIVE TO POSTAL SERVICE-ES; FROM HOW TO BEST FILL OUT THE HIRING REGISTER CHOICES, TO ANSWERING MOST OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS, ACCESS TO EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVES, HONEST FORECASTS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND ADVANCEMENT, ACCESS TO BENEFITS AND THERE ARE ACTUALLY A LOT MORE BENEFITS THAN MOST PEOPLE REALIZE.

2.....NEED GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE HIRING PROCEDURE AND THROUGH TRAINING.

3.....NEED PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH INITIAL OFFICE ORIENTATION.

4.....NEED TO CLEARLY UNDERSTAND ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN EVERY STEP OF HIRING, PLACEMENT, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AS WELL AS HOW THEY ARE BEING PAID, THEIR RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES, WHERE THEY WILL STAND IN SENIORITY AND WHAT THAT MEANS, RIGHT TO WORK ON UP TO THREE REGULAR ROUTES, ETC.

5.....THE NEED TO MINIMIZE PRE-SCREENING TIME ELEMENT.

6.....THE NEED TO BE ABLE TO ATTEND THE TRAINING ACADEMY AND DRIVER INSTRUCTION FOR ONE WEEK.

7.....A REALISTIC EXPECTATION OF WHAT THE JOB REQUIREMENTS ARE THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE CONTRACT RATHER THAN THE CURRENT OPERATIONAL EXIGENCIES.

V.....MISCELLANEOUS FACTS, ETC.

1.....THE UNION HAS BEEN COMPILING DATA FOR THE PURPOSES OF DETERMINING THE SUITABILITY OF A CLASS ACTION DISTRICT WIDE GRIEVANCE; THE RESULTS WILL BE SHARED WITH DISTRICT PERSONNEL FOR CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE. ANY UNION ACTIONS WILL BE BASED ON PERCEIVED COMMITMENT BY DISTRICT PERSONNEL TOWARD GENUINE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RESOLUTION OF THE CONCERN'S/PROBLEMS OUTLINED IN THIS REPORT.

2.....IN FY 93, THE CENTRAL NEW JERSEY DISTRICT EXPERIENCED FOUR RETIREMENTS AND 91 RELIEF EMPLOYEES QUIT. THE DISTRICT HIRED 83 REPLACEMENTS. TOTAL NEW HIRE FOR THE DISTRICT WERE 1083

IN FY 94, THE DISTRICT HAS ALREADY HIRED AS OF PP-8 63 RELIEF EMPLOYEES, WITH 36 RESIGNATIONS. ETC. TO DATE THE DISTRICT HAS HIRED 1245 NEW PEOPLE. PROJECTIONS CALL FOR AN ADDITIONAL 95 RELIEF EMPLOYEES.

3.....OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, OFFICES WITH A HIGH TURNOVER OF RELIEF EMPLOYEES INCLUDE CHESTER, BELLE MEAD, FORKED RIVER, JACKSON, LANOKA HARBOR, STOCKTON, FLEMINGTON, ENGLISHTOWN, AND WRIGHTSTOWN.

4.....THE UNION HAS MADE THE IDEAS FOR HIRING RCAS GUIDE ASSEMBLED BY THE NJSC AVAILABLE TO THE CENTRAL NEW JERSEY DISTRICT HUMAN RESOURCES STAFF AND THE GUIDE HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO EACH ASSOCIATE OFFICE WITH RURAL DELIVERY.

Kimberly, ID, April 22, 1994.

DEAR MR. BROWN: You were wanting some information on problems we have had because we haven't had a substitute to work for us.

I am a regular carrier serving Rt. 1 in Kimberly ID. In December of 1991 my sub transferred to Boise, ID, because her husband got a job in the Boise Valley. My postmaster had a sub lined up but she wasn't scheduled for her training until January. On Dec. 25th I became very ill. I had to go in on the 26th and case the mail because there was no one that knew how to case it and my postmaster delivered it. He, wasn't well either so I went ahead and did the route for the next couple of days until I was so sick that I couldn't function at all. My ex-sub did come from Boise and carried my route for three days. Because I worked and pushed too hard it took me six weeks to get well.

In February of 1992 I had to have emergency knee surgery and my sub was having back problems. She ended up not being able to work either and had to borrow a sub from another town. My sub ended up quitting because of her back so we had to get another sub, which always takes a long time.

In March of 1994 my sub quit. The rural carrier test was given in our area at the end of January. My sub was going to quit in January but stayed until the first week of March because she thought I would be able to get a sub soon. It is the end of April and we still haven't received a hiring list at our Post Office. My postmaster received the approval to hire a sub in February so it isn't his fault. It is ridiculous that it takes 4 or 5 months to hire a substitute. I have been fortunate to be able to borrow a sub from Hansen, ID, but there are times you need a sub and the one you are borrowing is not available. Just this last week I thought I was going to need some minor surgery done in the doctor's office. The only time the doctor could do it was Tuesday at 12:00 noon. The sub I was using had to work at Hansen that day. I did the first part of my route, went to the doctor, then went and finished my route. I think it would be a help if a retired carrier could help out even for 90 days.

DONNA KRUEGER.

IOWA RURAL LETTER CARRIERS ASSN.
Elk Horn, IA, April 12, 1994.

BILL BROWN,
President, NRLCA, Alexandria, VA.

DEAR MR. BROWN: In response to your Officers Bulletin Dated 3-30-94:

Question #1. Most of Iowa is doing fair but we constantly are having trouble with Stations and Branches in Des Moines, IA.

Question #2. I do not feel that to many have quite but mostly due to growth and failure by the P.O. to keep an adequate register. Grievances are being filed on that issue at the present time.

Question #3. Once again Des Moines is the hot spot. City carriers have even been used to cover on relief days, when all RCA's have been unavailable.

Question #4. Most carriers will work their relief day. However, we have had occasions in Des Moines only where this has happened.

Question #5. When management has offered to all RCA's in Statons and Branches and have let City Carriers carry, those city carriers do not take all of the mail for that day. This leaves extra mail for the regular when they return on the following work day. We also have filed a grievance on that issue.

I hope this will answer your questions. If you have any other questions or concerns please feel free to call at your convenience.

Sincerely;

ROLAND E. HANSEN,
Iowa State Steward.

ARKANSAS RURAL LETTER CARRIER'S ASSOCIATION,
Rudy, AR, April 13, 1994.

BILL BROWN,
President, NRLCA,
Alexandria, VA.

DEAR MR. BROWN: I am sure you are aware of this problem, but it is one that has been a problem for us. That is not being able to have relief for auxiliary routes. At least in this District Management will not hire any one to relieve the auxiliary route. I believe the retiree could fill this need.

In Garfield, AR 72732 Have two regular routes, 1 auxiliary route. Two relief carriers. Problem arose when regular carrier was on extended sick leave. Postmaster had to carry the auxiliary route on a regular basis. At times that required him to close the office to do so. This lasted for over a year. Attempts were made to borrow reliefs for nearby offices, to no avail.

At present the time lag on getting new replacements on board is totally out of reason. It is six to eight weeks before we can even look for relief.

Then there is the problem of them learning the route. And hoping they will stay and become a good relief.

In Barling, AR 72923 on a heavy duty LK for the last three years that route has had a continuous replacement of reliefs.

In Bentonville shortage of reliefs and four auxiliary routes. Caused the entire office to be placed on restricted sick leave.

Sincerely yours,

DAVID E. KING,
President, ARLCA.

NORTH LAUDERDALE CARRIER ANNEX,
North Lauderdale, FL.

GARY:

Twenty-two regular, three auxiliary routes in office.

RCA—Dan Yeapon—8/2/93.

RCR—M. Tauarez—7/26/93.

RCR—N. Iannelli—7/26/93.

RCA's needed for:

RR 2—sub resigning May 1994.

RR 4—no sub since 12/93.

RR 11—no sub since 12/93.

RR 18—sub regular effective May 1994.

RR 21—no sub since 8/93.

RR 39—no sub since 11/93.

RR 41—no sub since 3/94.

RR 34—route to go regular May 1994 "K" route.

Eight subs short as of May 1994.

We have been 3 to 6 subs short for most of 2 years.

Most subs resigned due to lack of benefits and too many hours, approximately 60-70/week.

On regular day off subs must sometimes cover 2 and 3 routes or at least pieces thereof.

Vacations and sick leave have always been covered.

Supervisors in our office have stated "that will never happen" (supervisors filling in for carriers).

January 4, 1993.

A/MANAGER CUSTOMER SERVICE:

The request for the hiring of RCAs has reached the point of complete abyss. As stated in letter dated 11/23/92 the proper delivery standards are in jeopardy of being compromised. My conversation with Peggy Stark this day only reinforces my belief Miami has dropped the ball. The union has been more than understanding of this situation. But I firmly believe this is over. I implore you to do whatever to assist this office in hiring RCAs and end this inert system presently being employed.

JOSEPH L. MILEWSKI,
A/Supt. Detached Unit.

November 13, 1992.

MANAGER CUSTOMER SERVICE:

This is a followup request of an urgent nature for the hiring of RCAs. The present staffing falls far short of those needed to properly maintain delivery standards. During my conversation with Peggy Stark I was informed that Miami was starting the process to hire (1) one RCA. All correspondence sent to Miami seem to fall on deaf ears. There is little need for me to rehash the figures presented to you to more than

justify the hiring request. Please do whatever with whomever to expedite the requested amount of RCAs.

JOSEPH L. MILEWSKI,
Supt. Detached Unit.

U.S. POST OFFICE,
Miami, FL, September 3, 1992.

RCA Complement, Rural Route.

To: Postmaster—Pompano Beach, Hialeah, Homestead, Key Largo, Tavernier, Islamorada, Marathon, and Summerland Key. Manager—Quail Heights and Snapper Creek.

Due to anticipated growth and possible creation of new routes specially in Pompano, Hialeah Annex and Snapper Creek and to forestall staffing crunch as these routes are established, it is imperative that RCA complement should be examined and analyzed. Other offices affected due to resignations or conversions of RCA's must also analyze their staffing needs. This memo however is not a hiring authorization but to assist you in determining your staffing requirements.

Questions concerning this matter may be directed to Richie Tandoc, Delivery & Retail Analyst at (305) 470-0339.

THOMAS G. DAY,
Field Director/Operation Support.

We need to hire six (6) RCA's to be properly staffed in our rural carrier craft.

JUSTIFICATION

1. See attached schedule showing vacancies.
2. As of Nov. 1, 1992, rural route 48, an auxiliary route will become a regular route thus leaving a vacancy of assigned relief for rural route 5.
3. Arlen Elias, regular carrier on route K004 is out on Worker's Compensation due to an on-the-job vehicle accident (Sept. 1990). He is not expected to return to rural carrier duties.

We still need 6 new employees to fill mandatory assignments. Hiring of these new RCA's is crucial in order to maintain delivery standards, reduce overtime and keep pace with the tremendous growth in our rural route territory.

Rural Carrier Associates (RCA's), New Hires.

ROLANDO JIMENEZ,
Director, Field Operations, Miami, FL.

We need to hire nine (9) RCA's to be properly staffed in our Rural Carrier Craft.

JUSTIFICATION

1. See attached schedule showing vacancies.
2. Within the next three months, Auxiliary Route 29, 41 and 48 will be regular routes. This will make a total of 21 regular routes requiring 42 employees. Presently there are 30 employees with 3 to start approximately January 13 (as of this date still not hired). We will still need 9 new employees to fill the mandatory assignments.
3. Arlen Elias, Regular Carrier on Route K004 is out on Worker's Compensation due to an on-the-job vehicle accident (Sept. 1990). He is not expected to return to rural carrier duties.
4. Two regular rural carriers, Gary Duquette and Yolanda DeLargy are instructors for the Rural Carrier Academy. This requires time away from their routes.
5. Yolanda DeLargy is an EI Facilitator and is a member of the Joint Steering Committee for the NRLCA. This requires time away from her route on a weekly basis.

Hiring of these new RCA's is crucial in order to maintain delivery standards, reduce overtime and keep pace with the tremendous growth in our rural route territory.

WILLIAM O. POTEET,
Postmaster.

Rural Carrier Associates (RCA's), New Hires.

RONALD A. RIPPO,

Manager, Customer Service, Pompano Beach, FL.

We need to hire five (5) RCA's to be properly staffed in our Rural Carrier craft.

JUSTIFICATION

1. RCA needed on Route #J-018. Walter Hagen, newly hired RCA has resigned 10/24/91.

2. We currently have four (4) auxiliary routes (16-21-26-48). We do not have coverage for these routes on Saturdays. (K. Day for our regular routes).

3. RR-21 and RR-48 are expected to go regular as a result of the recent count and inspection.

4. We currently have three (3) overburdened routes, K-003, K-012 and K-023. These routes will require a territory transfer to relieve overburdened status. (Evaluations of these routes are expected to be over 70 hours as a result of the count and inspection).

5. Arlen Elias—Regular Carrier on Route K004 is out on Worker's Compensation due to an on-the-job vehicle accident (Sept. 1990). He is not expected to return to Rural Carrier duties.

6. Two regular Rural Carriers, Gary Duquette and Yolanda DeLargy, are instructors for the Rural Carrier Academy. This requires time away from their routes.

7. Yolanda DeLargy is an EI Facilitator and also a member of the Joint Steering Committee for the NRLCA. This requires time away from her route on a weekly basis.

Hiring of these new RCA's is crucial in order to maintain delivery standards, reduce overtime and keep pace with the tremendous growth in our rural route territory.

The attached sheet details our current staffing showing vacancies on Routes J-018 and Auxiliary Routes 16-18-21-48.

If there is anything I can do to expedite this process, please advise.

JEFF ESSER,
Acting Manager.

Rural Route 1, Swayzee Post Office.

My route was a 48K with the evaluation of 63.36 hours and we cut it to a 46J with the start time of Dec. 11, 1993. We started the process to hire a sub for an aux. route on Nov. 15, 1993. There was no list to hire from, so we tired to hire an emergency hire and found a person by Nov. 22, 1993. My RCA quit on Dec. 10, 1993. The New RCR was finally hired on Jan. 15, 1994. The Second RCR was hired on March 26, 1994. From Dec. 10, 1993 to Feb. 7, 1994 I had no days off. I missed all the DJSC meetings during this time and all IRAT meetings and worked all K days. I only took off my J days from Feb. 7, 1994 until Mar. 26, 1994 with the use of a borrowed RCA.

KERRY DALRYMPLE,
Reg. Carrier Swayzee Post Office.

Walton, New York.

New hire RCAs time to get on board, I took June 1993 to October 1993, I took December 1993 to May 1994.

Stop gap measure—to use retired RC.

RALPH HUNTER, JR.,
RFD #3, BOX 4920,
Farmingdale, ME, April 9, 1994.

DEAR MR. BROWN: I welcome this opportunity to tell you about the relief carrier situation in my post office. Not only for the reason of testimony before the House Post Office Subcommittee on Compensation and Employee Benefits, but also as information when discussing relief problems with the Postal Service.

There are six full time routes here, three K, two LK and one H. At the present time only three routes have relief.

RR#1—RCA left before Christmas 1993, could not get along with regular.

RR#2—Full time relief but shares with two other routes.

RR#3—Full time relief but shares with one other route.

RR#4—No relief for one and a half years—one started in summer of 1993 but job was more than expected.

RR#5—Full time relief but is moving and will transfer to another office.

RR#6—No relief—disabled veteran was hired but job was too much.

As you can see, we have had quite a turnover of relief carries for various reasons. I think the biggest reason being that these people are not ready for the amount of work and stress this job creates.

In the last year and a half, there have been several times when carriers have worked while they were sick in order to cover their routes. Once an RCA was borrowed from another office and could not finish the route that day, leaving about fifty customers without mail that day.

Although no managers have had to deliver mail recently, we have used other craft members who are not familiar with our procedures and of course mail was delayed.

The new hiring procedures do not ready a person any better than the old system. Rural carriers have got to have more influence on the hiring of our relief.

Using retired carriers will help a situation like ours, but of the four most recent retirees in our office, three have passed away.

I hope this information will help you now and in the future negotiations.

Sincerely,

RALPH HUNTER, JR.

NORTH CAROLINA RURAL
LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION,

April 5, 1994.

Re: R.C.A. Problem, Hickory, N.C. 28602.

Hickory has 15 Regular Routes and 3 aux. routes at the present time. They are 5 subs. short. 3 RCR's have quit in the last few months after working only a few days. On several occasions, the R.C.R.'s that we have—has had to work 2 routes in 1 day and are switched from route to route regularly.

A number of regular carriers have been refused leave this year and vacation season has not even started.

I hope this information is helpful. If I can be further assistance—I will be happy to do so.

Thank you,

GEORGE B. HERMAN.

Adrian, MI.

Subject: Retirees as subs.

We have 8 "H" routes, but only have 5 subs. 3 of the 5 have full time jobs outside the postal service and are not available during the week on short notice. On April 30th we will be adding a 9th route and will be even shorter on subs.

This has caused problems especially at Holidays, like Thanksgiving and Christmas/New Years when several carriers want the same days off. Carriers have to work their Saturday relief days, too.

There seems to be a shortage of people who are both qualified and willing to work as subs . . . I can't remember the last time we all had a substitute. Several new subs have been hired who quit. One said "I don't know I'd have to drive on such bad roads." Others had job conflicts and their other job came 1st.

The carrier I worked for, as a sub, before she retired, wanted to come back as a sub but was told she would lose her benefits. She was trained, loved the job (and was loved by the customers) and would have been a wonderful conscientious employee. (She now is a part-time supervisor in a fabric store, and draws her retirement.)

ANN HALFORD.

March 24, 1994.

DEAR PRESIDENT BILL BROWN,

After the NRLCA Eastern States Conference, Sharon Delorme asked us to let you know our RCA problems in hiring.

Hiring a RCA is taking too long and they are very hard to get, especially to get a good one.

For example on Rural route 5 Essex Vermont, the RCA left in Oct. 1992. After much delay and much frustration, on an overburdened route, in April of 1993 a relief carrier was finally hired. There was only two people on the list to choose from. The process took so long the tendency is to keep a warm body in the position, rather than let a mediocre employee go, and begin the process again.

Another example is Rural route 3 in Essex Vermont, another over burdened route. The RCA left to become a "TE" in Oct. 1993. Finally in Feb. of 1994 a relief carrier was hired. Again there was only two people on the Register list.

In Jericho Vermont an RCA on the auxiliary route is out on an emergency medical problem, during the process of hiring an emergency relief, another RCA quit. There is only two people on their register. The rest of the carriers in the office are dreading the thought of all the missed "K" days they are looking at. The Postmaster is getting good at carrying the Aux route, but he still has to do his own work and make sure the office is covered. Judging from our QWL team offices' experiences, they are looking at three or four months of a very frustrating and stressful situation.

We hope that our that the input of our experiences will help your case.

Sincerely,

MARY JANE LEDERMAN,
For. QWL/EI Late Dinner Team
Essex, Jericho & Underhill Vermont.

April 9, 1994.

To: Bill Brown.
From: Lillian Omweg, Carrier—RR 3, St. Joseph, Mich.

I have been without a relief carrier since early, Jan. 1994. I was told the roster had no names left on it and I would have to wait until the test was given in late Jan. My postmaster finally picked a retiree for me approx. 4/1/94.

She is supposed to start 5/2/94.

This system doesn't work.

Also, my Manager did not train anyone in my office to carry my route to help me, so, after 4 wks. of carrying my 48K route 6 days a week, I suffered shoulder muscle strain and had to be off work 3 wks. The Postmaster paid 2 people to sort and carry my route while I was recuperating.

Cordially,

LIL OMWEG.

FLORIDA RURAL
LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION,
April 17, 1994.

WILLIAM BROWN
NRLCA President,
Alexandria, VA.

DEAR BILL, I'm writing in response to the request of post offices that have problems hiring and retaining RCAs. We have several offices in Florida that have had some problems in that area, so I have requested the local stewards to send you details on their particular office. I can provide some general information on the following post offices in the Sun Coast District.

The Sarasota office currently has 33 rural routes (26 regular and 7 auxiliary) and only has 20 RCAs. Management has continually been going through the hiring process for approximately the last two years. At one point, three RCAs were hired—one never showed up for training at the academy, one quit at the end of the academy training, and the third quit after the second day of training on the route. I personally asked the third person what her reasons were for quitting and explained the amount of time and money invested in the training. She stated that the job had been explained to her in detail prior to the training and they "painted the picture black". She just "didn't think it would be as hard as it is," and she didn't think it was for her.

On numerous Saturdays and days after a holiday, auxiliary routes will be "doubled up" and sometimes even split by reliefs on regular routes. During the Christmas season, several RCAs worked in excess of 60 hours a week!

The Bradenton post office has had similar problems and I have enclosed a note from one of the regular carriers concerning same. In September of 1993 a regular

carrier filed a grievance because he had been nine months without an RCA. Management stated they had made several attempts to hire without success. (There was a fallacy with the driver testing causing some of the delay.)

I spoke to the Human Resource Specialist that handles the testing and hiring for the 342 area and she stated that she was having trouble getting people to show up for an interviews. She had sent 20 notices an not one person responded.

The Tampa office has had phenomenal problems as they only had 25 percent of the regular routes with RCAs at one time. They recently hired six RCAs. The local steward, Scott Carpenter, will send you more detailed information.

I believe the shortage of RCAs is also affecting the morale of the carriers. Many are being worked excessive hours and shifted from route to route. Several are being put on overburdened routes with no training. In Ocala, one RCA received a Letter of Warning (later resolved in a grievance) for reversing the line of travel in order to serve the curbside boxes before dark. The centralized boxes were in a lighted mail room.

Hopefully, this information will be of some help to you.

Sincerely,

DEBBIE WILLIAMS,
NRLCA State Steward.

April 12, 1994.

Provided by Linda Wirksema, Regular Carrier.

PROBLEMS WITH SUB.'S—BRADENTON OFFICE

Regular carriers are asked to work their day off.

Regular carriers have been denied leave.

RCA's have been denied leave.

We have some RCA's working 7 days a week (Express Mail on Sunday).

RCA's have to carry more than one route in a day.

Auxiliary routes are not covered when regular carriers are off.

Aux. assistance is not available when needed on overburden routes.

RCA's have had to work on Sundays and holidays casing mail.

We are short two RCA's at this time and will be short a third at the end of May.

RR6—The sub. stopped working January 8. He resigned on February 27.

RR9—Has been without a sub since January 8.

RR10—Has a RCR assigned to it—her 180 days is up May 30.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP....
....WITH THE SAWYER BILL**

WHAT IS THE SAWYER BILL?

On October 7, 1993, Congressman Tom Sawyer (D-OH) introduced H.R. 3246, a bill that would allow retired postal workers to fill in temporarily for a rural postmaster or a rural letter carrier, without losing a portion of their retirement benefits.

This bill would allow retired rural letter carriers to go back to work without forfeiting a portion of their annuity. To insure that these retirees' were only working on a temporary basis, the bill would limit the temporary service to 90 days in a calendar year, with a 180 day lifetime limit.

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE SAWYER BILL NOW?

On May 12, 1994, NRLCA President William R. Brown, Jr. will be testifying in front of the House Post Office Subcommittee on Compensation and Employee Benefits to explain why the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association believes this bill is necessary to ensure smooth operations within many rural post offices.

HOW CAN WE PROVE THAT THE SAWYER BILL IS DESPERATELY NEEDED?

We can't prove it without your help. We need to find specific examples of post offices that have had problems hiring and retaining RCAs.

What we need you to do:

Lubec Post OFF. (1) Give us examples of specific post offices (exact location) where there has been a lot of difficulties hiring and keeping RCAs to fill in for the regular carrier.

RCA quit early 1993 (2) Tell us why the RCAs quit and how long a period it was before new RCAs were hired.
Letter of resignation
filed 6/14/93 - new
RCA not hired yet (4/17/94)

1 wk leave req (1/14/94-1/24/94) (3) Give us examples where due to a lack of RCAs the regular carrier was not able to utilize his/her vacation time or sick leave.
was called back to work 1/17/94.
Also was refused 1wk leave
(2/1/94 - 2/28/94)

I believe supervisor did not fill in
on 1/1/94 but did not witness
it myself - other carrier did. (4) Give us examples of supervisors filling in for carriers
(how often this happened and what effect it had).

An RCA from another off. (5) Anything at all that slowed down the flow of mail due
was brought in to fill in on
3/21/94 - sick day for eye exam
after 3 days training - still slow

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR EXAMPLES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!!

MAIL TO: Bill Brown, President, NRLCA, 1630 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314

(3) also would have liked to use 4/1/94 - 4/18/94 to attend Farm function
but did not even submit papers knowing no RCA available.

Postmaster Lubric M15

11/14/63

LUBRIC M15 04651

Dear Sirs, This is to inform you
that I will no longer be available for bid.
Several countries RPAZ Due to reasons of old
health.

Sincerely

Brian E. Fawell

REQUEST FOR OR NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Employee's Name (Last, First, M.I.) TRANSWELL, Richard A.		Social Security No. 006-32-4887	Date Submitted 2/23/94	No. of Hours Requested 24	PP 07	YEAR 94
Installation (for PM leave, Month, City, State & ZIP) U.S. MAIL CENTER 04252		Pay Loc. # (D/A Code) 001	From Date 3/21/94	Hour 0830	Day 01	Init Hours
Time of Call or Request Scheduled Reporting Time		Employee Can Be Reached At (If needed) 3/21/94 0830		Thru Date 3/21/94		
Type of Absence <input type="checkbox"/> Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Carrier <input type="checkbox"/> LWOP-Sick Reverse <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sick (See Reverse) <input type="checkbox"/> Late <input type="checkbox"/> COP <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Documentation (for Official Use Only) <input type="checkbox"/> For C. of Pay Leave (C/A on File) <input type="checkbox"/> For Advanced Sick Leave (L221 on File) <input type="checkbox"/> For Military Leave (Orders Reviewed) <input type="checkbox"/> For Court Leave (Summary Reviewed) <input type="checkbox"/> For Higher Level (L723 on File) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scheme Training Testing, Qualifying <input type="checkbox"/> (Memo on File)	Revised Schedule For (Date) <input type="checkbox"/> No Call <input type="checkbox"/> Approved in Advance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Begin Work	Lunch In	Lunch Out	End Work
Remarks (Do Not Enter Medical Information) <i>2012-02-22 sick, 22-23-94 friend</i>						
I understand that the annual leave authorized in excess of amount available to me during the leave year will be charged to LWOP.						
Employee's Signature & Date <i>Richard A. Transwell 2/23/94</i>		Signature of Person Recording Absence & Date <i>Richard A. Transwell 2/23/94</i>		Signature of Supervisor & Date Notified <i>Richard A. Transwell 2/23/94</i>		
Official Action on Application						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved (Give Reason) Leave Type Code <i>(See Reverse)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Mon 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Tue 11 <input type="checkbox"/> Wed 12 <input type="checkbox"/> Thur 13 <input type="checkbox"/> Fri 14				
Warning: The furnishing of false information on this form may result in a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment of not more than 5 years, or both. (18 U.S.C. 1001)						
[] <i>Continued on Reverse</i>						

Classified Document - ~~Do Not Copy~~ ~~Do Not Photocopy~~ ~~Do Not Post~~ ~~Do Not Scan~~ ~~Do Not Email~~ ~~Do Not Distribute~~

REQUEST FOR OR NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Employee's Name (Last, First, MI)	Social Security No.	Date Submitted	No. of Hours Requested	PP	YEAR
Ramsdell, Richard A.	086-32-4891	6/15/94	4 days	02	94
Installation (for PM leave, show city, State & ZIP)	Pay Loc # D/A Code	From Date	Hour	Day	Init.
Lubec, Me. 04652	C.C.1	1/14/94	1630	Sat 01	
Time of Call or Request	Scheduled Reporting Time	Employee Can Be Reached ^c At (If needed)	<input type="checkbox"/> No Call	Thru Date	Hour
				1/29/94	0830
Type of Absence	Documentation (for Official Use Only)	Revised Schedule For (Date)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carrier	<input type="checkbox"/> For C. or Pay Leave (C.A.l. on File)	Approved in Advance			
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual	<input type="checkbox"/> For Advanced Sick Leave (1221 on File)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes			
<input type="checkbox"/> LWOP (Sick Reserve)	<input type="checkbox"/> For Military Leave (Orders Reviewed)	<input type="checkbox"/> No			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sick (Sick Reserve)	<input type="checkbox"/> For Court Leave (Summons Reviewed)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Late	<input type="checkbox"/> For Higher Level (1723 on File)				
<input type="checkbox"/> COP	<input type="checkbox"/> Scheme Training Testing, Qualifying (Memo on File)				
Other					
Remarks (Do Not Enter Medical Information)					
<i>I understand that the annual leave authorized in excess of amount available to me during the leave year will be changed to LWOP.</i>					
<i>By Request of R. Ramsdell, 1/15/94</i>					
Employee's Signature & Date		Signature of Person Recording Absence & Date	Signature of Supervisor & Date Notified		
		1/15/94	1/17/94		
Official Action on Application					
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved (Give Reason) (See Reverse)					
Leave Type Code					
Warning: The furnishing of false information on this form may result in a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment of not more than 5 years, or both. (18 U.S.C. 1001)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Continued on Reverse					

Revere

Revere

NATIONAL RURAL
 LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, April 15, 1994.

Mr. WILLIAM BROWN,
 NRLCA President
 Alexandria, VA.

DEAR BILL: Enclosed you will find the list of grievances handled since 7-1-93 on the issues of: 1. No RCA, 2. Denial of AL, 3. Requirement to work relief day, and 4. Cancellation of approved AL.

Please advise what information you would like from each grievance in order to testify on May 12, 1994.

Sincerely,

SHARON ANN DELARME,
Executive Committeeman.

NJ-011C3.ALG, failure to provide an RCA, Vincentown.
 NJ-012C3.ALG, required to work relief day, Sicklerville.
 NJ-015C3.NYM, required to work relief day, Jackson.
 NJ-016C3.NYM, required to work relief day, Jackson.
 NJ-017C3.NYM, required to work relief day, Jackson.
 VA-016C3.MDA, denial of AL, Strasburg.
 VA-017C3.MDA, denial of AL, Vienna.
 VA-018C3.MDA, no RCA assigned to route, Spotsylvania.
 VA-019C3.MDA, no RCA assigned to route, Spotsylvania.
 VA-020C3.MDA, required to work relief day, Spotsylvania.
 VA-021C3.MDA, required to work relief day, Spotsylvania.
 VA-022C3.MDA, required to work relief day, Spotsylvania.
 VA-023C3.MDA, cancellation of approved AL, Spotsylvania.
 VA-024C3.MDA, required to work relief day, Spotsylvania.
 VA-026C3.MDA, no RCA assigned to route, Strasburg.
 VA-028C3.MDA, no RCA assigned to route, Stafford.
 VA-029C3.MDA, required to work relief day, Stafford.
 VA-036C3.MDA, required to work relief day and no RCA, Fredericksburg.

PENNSYLVANIA RURAL
 LETTER CARRIERS ASSOCIATION,
April 22, 1994.

From: Merle F. Ulsh, State Steward, PRLCA.
 To: William Brown, President, NRLCA.
 Subj: Sawyer Bill, request for info.

1. Enclosed are a few of the RCA and related problems experienced in this state within the last year. I estimate that the RCA problems are requiring about 70% of my time as a full time state steward.

Spring/Summer 1993—Boiling Springs—LK03 Carrier worked 22 consecutive relief days—Shortage of Reliefs.

1/93—Wrightsville—Regular Grecco worked 14 relief days—no relief carrier.

2/93—Wellsville—Aux relief unavailable causing regulars to be denied relief day.

3/93—Spring Grove—Rec wants to transfer to New Freedom—PM Spring Grove stalling. New Freedom Regular being denied relief day.

3/93—Mohrsville—No reliefs, Regular RR1 working relief day for 8 months.

3/93—Orwigsburg—RCA appears on 2 4240s—Regular denied relief days—shortage of relief carriers.

3/93—Duncansville—RCA leaving mail for Regular—denied full relief day.

1993—Brogue—Area Steward being denied time off for Union business because of relief unavailability.

4/93—Pine Grove—RCA to be transferred to this office from Hershey. Hershey PM stalling, Carrier Schneck being denied relief days.

1993—Sewickley—short 2 relief carriers—1 vacant route—1 carrier is AJSC Member and Area Steward—sub seniority problems.

5/93—Schulykill Haven—RCA terminated before completing first day solo on route—improper training by PM—Regular Carrier on leave during training process. Sub did well at Academy—Regular being denied relief day due to short of Relief Carrier.

On-going—New Hope—PM delivering Rural Route on Saturdays.

7/93—Schulykill Haven—Probationary RCA wanted day off to take care of mother with cancer—ordered to work or be fired RCA resigned—PM is the problem here.

7/93—Perkiomenville—shortage of relief carriers—relief on RR4 relieved of duties to work as casual on city route 1.

7/93—Morgantown—Unavailability of relief carriers.

10/93—Fleetwood—Short 2 reliefs. RR2 carrier ordered to work relief day.

11/93—Malvern—shortage of relief carriers.

11/93—Dauphin RCA required to work holiday as a casual—PM gave clerk leave.

12/93—Lincoln University—Regular required to work his holiday—shortage of relief carriers.

12/93—Schulykill Haven—Regular had personal problem—mother in law ill in Florida—denied leave required to work. No assigned relief for 1 year.

12/93—Felton—3—48K routes, 2 relief carriers, one of them out on OWCP—RR3 Carrier denied leave for hunting—approved, then rescinded. As of 3/94, still only 2 reliefs on rolls.

1/94—Ottsville—RCA had problem pregnancy—letter from Physician requested 7 mos LWOP—PM refused—RCA resigned.

2/94—Kingsley—Relief Carrier in National Guard—unavailable 1 Saturday each month.

1/94—Beech Lake—Relief works full time on Aux—Regular required to work his holiday.

2/94—Quakertown—short 3 relief carriers 1 relief available on Saturday only—1 working vacant route.

2/94—Hanover PA—Regular RR2 requested annual leave—Supervisor gave relief carrier time off (not in leave earning status).

12/93—Hollidaysburg—Regular carrier needs cataract surgery PM refuses to sign leave request because of no relief carrier.

Past & Present—Langhorne—severe relief problem city craft consistently used for relief carriers. 2 RCR for 5 routes—Philadelphia District—extremely difficult to hire RCAs.

Vehicle insurance rates high, must provide vehicle for delivery, welfare pays more than RCA. We now have Govt vehicles in this office. A 460 test has been administered and we are waiting for register.

Past & Present—Ambler—same as Langhorne—We have had a vacant route since September 1993 and unable to fill because we have reached the situation of the contract that we must fill the route from a register of eligibles. Presently waiting on that register.

Many of the above problems have been fixed with a band-aid through the POOMs. Very few grievances have been filed because the affected Carriers are reluctant to do so. Many are concerned about retaliation by managers. We still have the mindset in the field that you do everything in your power to make the system work, even if it is "broke". They will complain to the Union but rarely file a grievance.

I hope the above will be of help to you. If you need more detail on any item, please call.

Sincerely,

MERLE F. ULSH.

Philippi, WV, April 24, 1994.

BILL BROWN, I attended my district two WVRCLA meeting last night and I was instructed to contact you about any complaints about the hiring process of an RCA. It took Charleston, WV, 3 months from the day that the interviews were conducted, to get an RCA hired in my office. I work out of Moatsville, WV 26405. I am the only route out of that office. I have been told that it is the longest route in the State of WV. My route is 113 miles long with 430 boxes. I had to carry every day for three months with all of the snow and cold weather we had this winter. I am very displeased with the way that this situation was handled. The man that they hired got his letter to take his drug test the day that he was to take the test. We received the same letter earlier in the week, so he knew the day ahead of time, but he needed the form that he received to take the test. He didn't get his mail that day until after he went to Clarksburg, WV to take the test. He didn't get to take the test because he didn't have the paper. So he wasted a trip to Clarksburg. They set up another date and he went and took the test. Something came up that he had to take the test again. No reason was given. My guess is that they lost or misplaced the results the first time. At the meeting I found that I was not the only one with this

problem. I hope the next time this does not happen. If you have any questions, please call me at my home, (504) 457-2451.

Thank you,

ROBERT K. McDANIEL II.

MERRILL POST OFFICE,
Merrill, WI

Rural Route 8:

June 13, 1992—Vacant—RCA (Pophal) serving route.
 July 11, 1992—Pophal appointed Regular.
 Oct. 26, 1992—RCA hired (Manderfield).
 April 24, 1993—Last day RCA (Manderfield) actually worked.
 May 8, 1993—RCA doesn't show for scheduled J day—Regular came in.
 May 21, 1993—RCA terminated—main reason: unavailable.
 June 5, 1993—RCA officially terminated.
 June 1993—Regular asked Postmaster about new RCA, He has to get the roster.
 July 1993—Regular again asked Postmaster, He has no roster yet.
 August 1993—Regular again asked Postmaster, Roster is old, no desirables.
 August 1993—Regular again asked Postmaster, Roster is exhausted.
 Sept. 1993—Postmaster states Personnel will check if other rosters in area have anyone interested in being switched to our roster. No results.
 Sept. 1993—Postmaster is asked to check other offices for RCA or RCR willing to work in our office. No results.
 Early Oct. 1993—Postmaster is given permission to do "Emergency Hire".
 Nov. 2, 1993—Two people are picked—(but to late for Nov. training).
 Nov. 29 thru Dec. 3, 1993—Only one person shows for scheduled training in Green Bay Wisconsin.
 Dec. 6, 7, 1993—Emergency Hire—Relief carrier trains with Regular.
 Dec. 8, 1993—Emergency Hire—Relief carrier resigns. Postmaster states he has two people in mind and will work on this Dec. 9.
 Dec. 13-17, 1993—Two people sent for Medical exams and drug testing. One Person backs out & the other applicant is medically undesirable.
 Jan. 5, 1994—RCA from Antigo, WI brought in to train on Route 8 Available weekdays only.
 Early Jan. 1994—An applicant is sent for medical exam & drug testing. Not hired, do to medical reasons.
 Late Jan. 1994—Regular asks Postmaster to continue seeking applicants.
 Feb. 1994—An applicant is selected and sent for medical exam & drug test.
 March 7-11, 1994—New relief carrier goes to training in Green Bay, WI.
 March 14, 1994—New relief carrier starts route training.
 March 26, 1994—Relief carrier serves route for the 1st time. It has been 11 months since the regular has been able to take a regular scheduled relief day without negotiating the use of another route's relief person.

Rural route 6:

July 19, 1993—A RCA had a serious car accident while delivering the route. The regular carrier was on vacation. The remaining mail could not be delivered until an available RCA finished at his regular job.
 July 20, 1993—An untrained RCA ran the route and naturally ran late with his deliveries.
 July 21, 1993—The regular carrier cut her vacation short and came back to work. During this period the retired carrier from this route was available and could have run the route.
 Thanksgiving weekend 1993 the regular carrier could not get off because the RCA was on light duty from the accident and no other RCA was available.
 March 21, 1994—The regular carrier on Rt. 2 was called in to work on her day off so her RCA could work a sickday for the regular carrier on Rt. 6. Her RCA is still on light duty.
 March 26, 1994—No RCA was available for the auxiliary route so the supervisor had to deliver the route. A RCA is not available on a regular basis for Saturday so the supervisor may have to fill in again.

WHY RCA'S QUIT

Get full time or part time employment elsewhere with benefits.
 Lack of hours available for them to work.
 They find it hard to be available at all times.

After they find out just what the job involves and that it is a difficult position—it is too overwhelming for them.

Getting a Regular Carrier position usually takes a long time.

New RCA's get a lower rate of pay, than RCA's hired prior to 1990.

If a roster is in place, the hiring of an RCA usually takes the minimum of 3 months.

We hope our thoughts and experiences can be of help to you.

Sincerely,

NANCY BIRKETT,
Union Steward.

Mr. BROWN. Madam Chairperson, thank you for holding these hearings on this problem. We are pleased to give our views on the Rural Relief Act of 1994. We are very grateful to Congressman Sawyer for introducing the bill and pursuing passage. We thank the U.S. Postal Service for their support and welcome supporting statements from our good friends, the presidents of both post-masters organizations.

This problem touches the lives of rural letter carriers throughout the country. Our State steward from California writes as follows: In virtually every district, there has been relief carrier hire and retention problems. In fact, the horror stories in this regard have reached unprecedented proportions.

Rural carriers who have earned leave are unable to use it. Carriers are working sick, when they should be able to see their doctors or be at home. A mother of a bride is told she must work on her daughter's wedding day, and let me comment if I can. She called me twice on that date and was wanting some relief, and I couldn't get her, so she had to work while her daughter was being married. Another has told me that he may not be a pallbearer at his best friend's funeral, a grandson's graduation is missed, and another called in tears to tell me how she must cancel her trip for the birth of a granddaughter, as there is no relief replacement for the routes.

These are all telephone calls I have received in the last 2 years. Never mind the Saturday Little League games or the family picnics missed all because there is no relief replacement for the route.

We requested Congressman Sawyer to help when no other path to a solution seemed possible. This legislation, simply stated, provides a source of relief where the U.S. Postal Service cannot recruit or retain relief employees.

For the past two decades, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association and the U.S. Postal Service have tried several different policies regarding relief employees. None was a complete solution.

Through the congressionally granted collective bargaining process, we have gained some rights for our members that they cherish. Our labor agreement with the U.S. Postal Service, article 10, section 2, paragraph A states that:

Rural carriers shall be granted annual leave in minimum units of one day. Rural carriers should be granted annual leave in accordance with their personal wishes, provided a substitute rural carrier associate or rural carrier relief employee is available for their replacement. It shall be the responsibility of each rural carrier to plan annual leave at times when a leave replacement is available.

Normally, we choose the days we wish to take off from work. However, in some areas carriers are unable to take any kind of leave because there are too few or no relief carriers. Many of our routes are evaluated so that carriers deliver 5 days a week and the

relief carriers should carry mail 1 day a week. However, in some instances, regular carriers have gone long periods of time where they must work 6 days a week because there are no leave replacements for the rural carrier and the postmaster or a supervisor has to deliver the route.

There are often periods, up to 4 months or more, where there have been no relief carriers for a given post office. Violence in the workplace has caused us all to be more careful. Thorough screening background checks and drug testing that is necessary has lengthened the time some post offices have gone without relief carriers.

Why is the U.S. Postal Service having trouble recruiting and retaining leave replacements? The job has limited benefits since they are noncareer employees. Most of them must supply their own vehicle. The road conditions are such that it is very hard on a vehicle. The average route is 54 miles long and has over 450 stops. This is hard on a vehicle.

The job is not what a relief replacement thought it would be. Learning the scheme of sorting the mail for delivery and the techniques of driving and delivering takes time and training. Beginners and improperly trained relief carriers take much longer to sort the mail and deliver a route. Some new reliefs will return to the office very late without having delivered all the mail. This is frustrating to them and our customers.

These relief employees must be available at all times on short notice to work the very next day. This means that they are unable to hold another job unless they are self-employed or have job schedules that allow them to be available to work as needed, or as in the case of this piece of legislation, they are retired.

We believe the solution that will help this problem is to pass H.R. 3246. Passage will enable people who are familiar with rural delivery to serve as relief employees. Some retirees have served the U.S. Postal Service for 20, 30, 40 or even more years. Therefore, they would require little training, if any.

Currently, because of the offset provision in the pension law, there is only one rural letter carrier serving as a relief. In the current law, the U.S. Postal Service is not included in the appeal for exemption by the location provision. Even if the U.S. Postal Service was permitted that solution, it would be a bureaucratic nightmare.

In excess of 10,000 post offices have rural delivery. It is possible thousands could simultaneously request an OPM waiver. We agree with the concept of preventing double dippers.

However, relief employees are not any more than their name implies—relief. Some may work 1 day a week, many will work only sick and vacation days when the regular carrier is off. Therefore, there is no intention to double dip, but only to provide enough incentive to attract retirees to fill a need.

Madam Chairperson, we thank you for holding this hearing. We thank you for your concern and support on this issue. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Brown.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Brown follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM R. BROWN, JR., PRESIDENT, NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION

My name is William R. Brown, Jr. I am the President of the 83,000 member National Rural Letter Carriers' Association. Daily, rural letter carriers drive 2.7 million miles on 50,000 rural routes serving 23 million American families.

If it would please the Committee, I would like to submit, for the record, letters concerning the problem of leave replacements for our rural letter carriers from all over the country.

Madam Chairperson, thank you for holding hearings on this problem. We are pleased to give our views on the Rural Relief Act of 1994. We are very grateful to Congressman Sawyer for introducing the Bill and pursuing passage. We thank the United States Postal Service for their support and welcome supporting statements from our good friends, the Presidents of both Postmasters organizations.

We requested Congressman Sawyer's help when no other paths to a solution seemed possible. This legislation simply stated provides a source of relief employees where the United States Postal Service cannot recruit or retain relief employees. Over the past two decades, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association and the United States Postal Service have tried several different policies regarding relief employees. None was a complete solution.

Americans living in rural communities depend on the mail for communication more than their urban counterparts. They depend on delivery being consistent. They often utilize their mail carrier as a small post office on wheels, but must know what time he or she arrives daily, to do so.

The United States Postal Service's satisfaction index is generally higher in rural America. Likewise, rural letter carriers have the highest employee satisfaction index of all craft employees. This legislation will help to insure that those two satisfaction indexes will continue being high and customers will continue to receive the high caliber of service they have been accustomed to receiving since rural delivery was initiated in 1896 by Congress.

Through the Congressionally-granted collective bargaining process, we have gained some rights our members cherish. In our labor agreement with the United States Postal Service, Article 10, Section 2, Paragraph 2, Paragraph A., states that, "Rural carriers shall be granted annual leave in minimum units of one day. Rural carriers should be granted annual leave in accordance with their personal wishes, provided a substitute, rural carrier associate, or rural carrier relief employee is available for their replacement. It shall be the responsibility of each rural carrier to plan annual leave at times when a leave replacement is available." Normally, we choose the days we wish to take off from work. However, in some areas, carriers are unable to take any kind of leave, because there are too few or no relief carriers. Many of our routes are evaluated so that carriers deliver five days a week and the relief carriers should carry mail one day a week. However, in some instances, regular carriers have gone long periods of time where they must work six days a week because there are no leave replacements for the rural carrier and the Postmaster or a supervisor has to deliver the route.

There are often periods, up to four months or more, where there have been no relief carriers for a given post office. Violence in the work place has caused us all to be more careful. Thorough screening background checks and drug testing that is necessary, has lengthened the time some post offices have gone without relief carriers.

Why is the United States Postal Service having trouble recruiting and retaining leave replacements?

1. The job has limited benefits since they are non-career employees.
2. Most of them must supply their own vehicle. The road conditions are such that it is very hard on a vehicle. The average route is 54 miles long and has over 450 stops. That is hard on a car.
3. The job is not what a relief replacement thought it would be. Learning the scheme of casing the mail for delivery and the technique of driving and delivering takes time and training. Beginners and improperly trained relief carriers take much longer to sort the mail and deliver a route. Some new reliefs will return to the office very late without having delivered all the mail. This is frustrating to them and our customers.

4. These relief employees must be available at all times on short notice to work the very next day. This means they are unable to hold another job unless they are self-employed or have other job schedules that allow them to be available to work as needed, or, as in the case of this piece of legislation, they are retired.

We believe the solution that will help this problem is to pass H.R. 3246 into law. Passage will enable people who are familiar with rural delivery to serve as relief

employees. Some retirees have served the United States Postal Service for 20, 30, 40 or more years. Therefore, they would require little training, if any. It would provide a re-connection with their employer. Most of all, it will reconnect them to a community they served for many years. They could be of assistance while the Postal Service is recruiting, testing, backgrounding and training new leave replacements.

Currently, because of the offset provision in the pension law, no retired rural letter carrier is serving as a relief. In the current law, the United States Postal Service is *not* included in the appeal for exemption by the location provision. Even if the United States Postal Service was permitted that solution, it would be a bureaucratic nightmare. In excess of 10,000 post offices have rural delivery. It is possible thousands could simultaneously request an OPM waiver. We agree with the concept of preventing double-dippers.

However, relief employees are not any more than their name implies—RELIEF. Some may work one day a week, many will work only sick and vacation days of the regular carrier. Therefore, there is no intention to double-dip, but only to provide enough incentive to attract retirees to fill a need.

Madam Chairperson, we thank you for holding this hearing. We thank you for your concern and support on this issue. I would be pleased to answer any questions the Committee has.

Ms. NORTON. Ms. Cregan.

Ms. CREGAN. I am Teena Cregan, Director of Government Relations for the National Association of Postmasters of the United States. I am appearing in place of David Games, who is our President. He was out of town and was unable to get a flight back in that would allow him to attend this hearing. With me is Ken Vlietstra, NAPUS's executive director. He is also a retired postmaster.

NAPUS represents more than 42,000 active and retired postmasters in all 50 States as well as the District of Columbia. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to appear before you today. I will summarize our statement and ask that our full statement be put into the record.

I am here to ask for your support for H.R. 3246, the Rural Area Relief Act of 1994. This bill would allow retired postmasters and rural carriers to return to work on a temporary basis without losing their annuity. Under current law, a retired postal employee who returns to work for the Postal Service must take a reduction in annuity payments to offset salary received during reemployment with the Postal Service. This penalizes retirees who choose to return to public service since they can work for any private industry without losing a portion of their annuity. NAPUS believes it is poor policy to discourage retirees from using skills they have spent years acquiring, particularly when their utilization would benefit both the Postal Service and the community.

The Postal Service is unique as a Federal agency because its offices are required to operate six days a week. This means that trained supplemental employees must be available. Postmasters and rural carriers should not be required to forego sick leave, vacation leave, or family leave because there are no trained replacements available, nor should they be required to work extensive overtime. Yet this is happening throughout the country simply because there are no reliable replacements, particularly in rural areas.

About half of the post offices in the United States are so small that the postmaster is the only full-time clerical employee. In an office of this size, the postmaster is basically placed in the position of running a small business. It is a highly skilled position. Many

of the tasks are learned through several months' experience. I have attached a job description for postmaster at that level so you can see the responsibilities that are required.

Yet the person who takes the position of postmaster relief during these absences may only be working a half day on Saturday and a few other designated days, and must also be available on short notice if the postmaster becomes ill.

As you have heard already, that is not a high paying job, and has no benefits. Many people are not willing to go through the hiring process and the required training for so few hours and such low pay. Someone who wants a part-time job is unlikely to want one that has such heavy responsibility. Someone who wants a full-time job wants more hours and more employment benefits. So this is the reason that turnover in these positions is high.

A postmaster retiree who wants extra income, is already familiar with the duties, and knows the people in the community would be a perfect fit for this position. The shortage of rural carrier reliefs is also a concern to us because of its effect to the postmasters and on mail service to the customers. If a relief is not available for the rural carrier, the postmaster is often obliged to lock up the post office and go deliver the mail for the absent rural carrier.

H.R. 3246 has been narrowly crafted to make sure that it would not take away opportunities from people who are looking for permanent positions within the Postal Service. Temporary service, as you have already heard, is limited to 90 days in a year with a 180-day lifetime limit.

Why should the Postal Service be allowed this exemption? The Postal Service is different from other agencies for two reasons:

First, it is a quasi independent agency that doesn't rely on tax funds to operate. Therefore, the retirees who return to work for the Postal Service would not really be receiving additional Federal funds.

Second, the Postal Service is different from other agencies because it has at least one office in every city and town in the country. In rural areas that often means a very small pool of qualified applicants for the positions.

While the Office of Personnel Management does provide a waiver, our understanding was that that waiver was intended to cover natural disasters, and we see the Rural Area Relief Act as a reasonable alternative.

NAPUS strongly supports this legislation and urges the subcommittee to approve the bill and work for its enactment into law. That concludes my testimony.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Miss Cregan. You seem to have caught my cold.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Games follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID GAMES, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POSTMASTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

Madam Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, I am David Games, President of the National Association of Postmaster of the United States (NAPUS). NAPUS represents more than 42,000 active and retired postmasters in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to appear before you today.

I am here to ask for your support for H.R. 3246, the Rural Area Relief Act of 1994. This bill would allow retired postmasters and rural carriers to return to work

on a temporary basis without losing their annuity. Under current law, a retired postal employee who returns to work for the Postal Service must take a reduction in annuity payments to offset salary received during reemployment with the Postal Service. This penalizes retirees who choose to return to public service since they can work for any private industry without losing a portion of their annuity. NAPUS believes it is poor policy to discourage retirees from using skills they have spent years acquiring, particularly when their utilization would benefit both the Postal Service and the community.

The Postal Service is unique as a federal agency because its office are required to operate six days a week. Some facilities require processing personnel on all seven days, even through the window office may be closed. This means that, in order to comply with federal employment regulations, trained supplemental employees must be available. Postmasters and rural carriers should not be required to forego sick leave, vacation leave or family leave because there are no trained substitutes available nor should they be required to work extensive overtime. Yet that is happening throughout the country simply because there are no reliable replacements, particularly in rural areas of the country.

About half of the Post Offices in the United States are so small that the postmaster is the only full-time clerical employee. In an office of this size, the postmaster is basically placed in the position of running a small business. The postmaster and the postmaster replacement must be familiar with postal regulations, including the complicated regulations that govern publication and business mail. That person's duties include sorting the mail, managing stamp stock, and preparing financial reports as well as dealing with customer needs and complaints. It is a highly skilled position and many tasks are learned through several months' experience. It requires a minimum of 24 hours of training. Also, because the postmaster and the postmaster replacement handle the account books for that office, they are held accountable for any money missing or mishandled, even to the point of criminal liability. I have attached a USPS job description for a postmaster of that level so that you can see the responsibilities that are required.

Yet the person who takes the position of postmaster relief during these absences may only be working a half day on Saturday and a few other designated days. Of course, that person must also be willing to come in on short notice if the postmaster becomes ill. The job of postmaster relief pays \$4.63 to \$7.70 and has no benefits. Many people are not willing to go through the Postal Service's hiring process and the required 24 hours of training for so, few hours and such low pay. Someone who wants a part-time job is unlikely to want one that entails such heavy responsibility. Someone who wants a full-time job needs more hours and employment benefits. Turnover in these relief positions can be quite high.

A postmaster retiree who wants extra income, is already familiar with the duties and knows the people in the community would be a perfect fit for this position. The retiree would have an opportunity to remain in touch with the community and to provide a service to that community. The community would benefit from enhanced mail service, greater continuity and responsiveness to community issues.

While our testimony is mainly intended to cover the concerns of postmasters, the shortage of rural carrier reliefs is also of concern to us because of its affect on postmasters and on mail service to their customers. If a relief is not available for the rural carrier, the postmaster is often obliged to lock up the post office and go deliver the mail for an absent rural carrier. The availability of a trained backup would allow the postmaster to avoid that additional duty. It would also avoid the risk of reduced retail service that could occur if it becomes necessary to close the office to deliver mail to the rural route.

H.R. 3246 is merely intended as a stop-gap measure to allow postmasters the opportunity to fill an immediate, emergency need. This bill has been narrowly crafted to assure that it would not take away opportunities from people who are looking for permanent, full-time positions within the Postal Service. It is limited to postmaster reliefs and rural carrier reliefs and does not include any craft positions. The temporary service is limited to 90 days in a year with a 180-day lifetime limit.

Why should the Postal Service be allowed an exemption from Title V? The Postal Service is different from other agencies for two reasons. First, as you know, it is a quasi-independent agency which does not rely on tax funds to operate. Therefore, retirees who return to work for the Postal Service would not be receiving additional federal funds. Thus there would be no effect on the federal deficit. It would be just as if the retiree went to work for any private employer. Second, the Postal Service is different from other agencies because it has at least one office in every city and town in the country. In rural areas, this means there is a very small pool of qualified applicants for these positions. It often takes several months to hire and train a postmaster replacement or rural carrier replacement, which causes a hardship for

the postmaster or rural carrier whose obligation it is to cover the work until a replacement is on board.

We understand that, under current law, the Office of Personnel Management can provide a waiver for the Postal Service. However, our understanding is that the waiver was really intended to cover natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes where people needed to be pressed into service on an emergency basis. Even if it were intended for situations such as the ones we have described, it would not be a timely solution for postmasters and communities throughout the country. We see the Rural Area Relief Act as a reasonable alternative.

Often, postmasters in small offices feel they are, in some ways, forgotten employees. They are a very dedicated group of employees with tremendous national pride. Passage of this bill will relieve these postmasters of unnecessary job stress and show them their country cares about them as individuals.

NAPUS strongly supports this legislation and urges this Subcommittee to approve H.R. 3246 and to work for its enactment into law. This concludes my testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

FUNCTIONAL PURPOSE

Supervises and provides any combination of window, box, general delivery, rural route, highway contract route, or city delivery service for a small community.

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Workload service credits normally fall between 126 and 335. These numerical limits are subject to the rules of tolerance and credit for exceptions.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Operates a small, single unit postal facility, supervising a small-size group of carriers and/or clerks in the performance of distribution, delivery, and window services.
2. Implements and adheres to approved programs as they apply to local requirements; operates within established rules, laws, and procedures.
3. Submits and administers a small operating budget.
4. Trains new employees to ensure quality service.
5. Ensures that proper safeguards are instituted for the welfare of the customers and for the protection of the mails.
6. Maintains files and records and submits reports.
7. May personally handle window transactions and perform distribution tasks as the workload requires.
8. Has regular contact with postal customers.
9. Exercises normal protective care of accountable paper, building, equipment, and supplies used.
10. Supervises a very small group of carriers and/or clerks.
11. Exercises a normal regard for the safety of self and others.

SUPERVISION

Director, Field Operations; or MSC Director, Field Operations

SELECTION METHOD

See Handbook EL-311, Section 540—Selection Policies For Nonbargaining Positions.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Sawyer.

Mr. SAWYER. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Could I ask any of the three witnesses to respond to the question that you posed earlier so we can get a clearer definition of who we are talking about when we are talking about rural postmasters and rural letter carriers?

Mr. VLIETSTRA. As far as rural postmasters, I have offered testimony in other forums on that subject, so that definition is well defined already in current practices. A postmaster relief can only be

employed in an office where there is no other career clerk, so already that is very limited. If there are no other career clerks, you can have a postmaster relief.

There are approximately 17,000 offices of this size category throughout the country. Out of 28,000, 17,000 would have a postmaster relief position in that office, meaning there is no other career clerk. You may have a rural carrier, but not a career clerk that could take that postmaster's place. So it is well defined by current structure.

Mr. SAWYER. Could we comment on the rural letter carriers?

Mr. BROWN. Okay, if I can, Madam, to show you what we have to go through.

Out of that 28,000 post offices, I think about 10,000 of them have rural carriers. To become a relief replacement, the Postal Service has to open a register and you have to take an examination and you have to pass, then you have to be reached on that register to be offered the position, and since we had all the violence and stuff in our workplace, we are very careful of how we do it, so they have to go through a background check.

Then you have to go through the drug screening and everything before you are hired, so that delays the application. And after that passes, then you have to go through a training, which the Postal Service already testified to the fact, and we have got these training academies, thanks to the work and cooperation of the Postal Service. And it hasn't been the way it is over three years. We got academies set up, and rural carriers do the training for the reliefs because who can do the job better than the one who does it? They train these relief carriers and then they send them to the post office, and they work with the rural letter carrier for about two or three days, then they are on their own.

Where we run into a problem, what is delaying this, for whatever reason the Postal Service in some places has not had a register in years; we just can't get relief replacement. In some part of the country, they just don't want to work one day a week. But there is a retired rural carrier and we get to this convention and you are looking at one who is fixing to retire, but if I went back to my home and the Postal Service needed some help, I would be willing to go out and run that route a day a week or a day a month to help the Postal Service until they could recruit somebody to come in off the register.

That is what we are trying to do is to deliver the mail. I can't see where we are trying to make a full-time job out of it. That isn't what the bill says. It is 90 days or 180 days in a lifetime.

We met with Congressman Sawyer, and we are the one that came up with 180 days and asked him to pass it. We figured because most of our rural routes are K routes, as we call them, you work five days and you are off one, and 52 days a week you know that somebody can work. That gives him a whole year to get somebody to relieve, just as soon as they hire somebody, that retiree is gone.

Mr. SAWYER. Would it be fair to say that we could—if we needed to, in order to address the concern that the Chair mentioned, that we could designate specific positions within a specific definition under current practices?

Mr. BROWN. Yes.

Mr. SAWYER. So it would be possible to achieve that kind of specific definition. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Sawyer.

Is this at bottom a question of pay? I was shocked, Mr. Olvera, no wonder people don't want to be trained. You are not supposed to have to be trained if you are making \$4.65 an hour. Is this a question of pay as much as anything else?

Mr. OLVERA. I guess that makes recruitment a problem—the \$4.63 that I mentioned. These are people who start out at the very small offices. These are offices that are open anywhere from 2 hours to 6 hours a day in the very rural communities, and they start out at \$4.63. After 3 years, they get a raise to \$6.94. After they have been there 5 years, they get \$8.33 an hour. So it is not like a postmaster is dying to retire to go make \$8.33 an hour, and I would assume that they give them the high rate of pay, but we are not talking about a lot of money, and that is a problem interwoven into the recruiting problem. But it also has to do with postmasters who have a current relief that aren't available for some reason or another. The postmaster is going to a convention and then illness strikes the relief. In situations like this you need some emergency type help.

Ms. NORTON. This relief, these relief salaries, how do they compare to the salaries of the postmaster himself or the postal clerk?

Mr. OLVERA. They are about half. I think a starting clerk makes somewhere around \$11 an hour.

Ms. NORTON. It is interesting here if one plays with numbers. Assuming this is about a half million dollar bill, peanuts, yes, but one wonders whether it is a situation that would cost us less if the post office simply paid people enough money to attract relief and for that matter other workers.

In the private sector that the post office says it is now a part of, when you find that you cannot recruit employees and you live in a system not with a demand economy but a market economy, it doesn't take long for you to figure out that if you raise it gradually, you may attract more people. I am wondering why that is not the answer to this question and whether I am wondering if that answer wouldn't be cheaper for the post office and somewhere along the line—

Mr. OLVERA. These new salaries represent an increase of what they were making 10 months ago. Ten months ago they were all more toward that bottom side until they really saw the difference and a lot of the problems when a postmaster relief works. This is a part-time job. They have a full-time job to get them through, and they work this part-time and sometimes their full-time job gets in the way of the part-time job, and guess which one they are going to choose to work for that day?

Mr. BROWN. Madam, may I say something? I became employed with the Postal Service in 1964. In 1964, I was working for a big company making 75 cents an hour, but I was working from 10 at night until 6 in the morning. My rural letter carrier didn't have a substitute, and that is when the congressional people appointed the rural carriers, so they appointed me to be a relief carrier, and I was

making \$4 something an hour. I thought I died and went to heaven, because I was making 75 cents. All I was offered was a position, but I stayed there long enough to become a career employee.

So on our rural letter carriers, we negotiate with the post office on salaries. So we went to arbitration a few years ago because we couldn't agree and the arbitrator gave us what we call a step A, which brought it down to \$7 and something an hour, but you have to work your way up if you stay there. Then if you work up to the highest point, then that is as high as you can go other than the raise that we negotiate with the Postal Service.

Ms. NORTON. Our staff may perhaps be able to—

Mr. BROWN. But if the rural carrier—

Ms. NORTON [continuing]. Get more information on the pay scales for such employees.

Mr. SAWYER. Madam Chairman, I heard you say something that I think may need some clarification. The \$500,000, as I understand it, that we are talking about in this measure is not what we would be paying people coming out of retirement to fill these jobs. We would be paying somebody the amount of money that it takes to do these jobs. The \$500,000 is the money that would not be taken away from retirees, and therefore would represent a windfall for the retirement system. This is not even an additional cost to the system. It is a windfall foregone. They are really by most standards of pay as you go, this really does not represent an additional cost. Thanks.

Ms. NORTON. Yes, because it is dollar for dollar whether the person comes from inside the Postal Service formally or comes from outside.

Mr. SAWYER. If this bill doesn't pass, those people aren't going to work. This isn't going to be a cost.

Ms. NORTON. Nevertheless, the notion of raising the pay might attract others to find this attractive, and I would like to know more about that issue. Could you just give us a profile of who the relief employees are and who the relief postmasters are? Who are these people? I am talking about the ones that don't come from inside the Postal Service.

Mr. VLIETSTRA. Well, again, you have got to consider the communities where these offices exist. First off, the general population in a community of this nature is typically 100 or less total citizens in that community, so your recruitment pool is very limited to begin with.

Ms. NORTON. Say that again.

Mr. VLIETSTRA. One hundred or less total population within the community.

Ms. NORTON. They are delivering to a population—

Mr. VLIETSTRA. Not necessarily delivering. There is a post office in that community where there may be a postmaster.

Ms. NORTON. But would not the delivery pool be a possible pool from which to recruit?

Mr. VLIETSTRA. The majority of these offices do not have delivery, there is no delivery there, all right?

Ms. NORTON. I see.

Mr. VLIETSTRA. In many cases, some of these communities have a rural carrier that comes from a larger community that may deliver to that community if there is delivery. You are talking about some very small communities here where this situation of a postmaster relief exists. So first off the limited population that is there, the limited availability of a pool for anyone to be hired. It may not even be necessarily a question of the pay necessarily because it is the very other situations, very intermittent dollars.

For our part-time postmasters who already work a six day week themselves, the only time that postmaster relief would work is when they are off on leave for a day, so you wouldn't have a guarantee that they would work during the course of a month. They may not work at all.

Ms. NORTON. You mean for the retired postal person?

Mr. VLIETSTRA. Or whoever the relief person is for that job. In other offices, they would regularly work every Saturday in that office. Again, typically 2 hours to a maximum of four hours on a Saturday. That is all you get on a weekly basis, 2 to 4 hours of work.

Again, we are not talking about some big time employment here, and who wants to take that job and obligate a Saturday every week for that and have to forego anything else that they might want to do on the weekend? So that is where the problem exists, too.

The situations that this bill helps address, then, is that, yes, we can generally find somebody to be that relief person. Well, what happens when that relief, then, is no longer available? What stopgap can we have to cover those types of further situational emergencies, and that is exactly where this bill is intending to replace them.

Ms. NORTON. Under this legislation, early retirees and buyouts would take advantage of this legislation?

Mr. BROWN. The rural letter carriers don't have anything like that. We were exempted from that.

Ms. NORTON. They are exempted entirely from that.

Mr. BROWN. But let me speak, if I can.

The rural letter carriers that are retired, not all of them, but the majority of them, this has been their life. When they retire they want something to do, and they have pressured us to get Congressman Sawyer to introduce this bill. If we could just go back and just work every once in a while, we would be happy. We would like to give our service to the community.

Most of these places that he is talking about, the rural letter carriers know every patron by name because they have been there so long, they know them by name. They get in the service.

Where they were talking about danger, I don't know what he is talking about. I can't see any danger of bringing somebody back that has worked there for 40 years or 20 years because they are part of the community. A lot of places like he is talking about there are 28,000 post offices, 10,000 of those have rural in them. In this office it may be a level what we call 15 or 17, maybe a head out office. In this community he is talking about a small post office, what we as rural letter carriers call an immediate office. We deliver mail there and encase mail for the rest of the route. That is what he is talking about in the small community.

Ms. CREGAN. We see this as being a benefit not only to the people who come back but also to the community because as he was saying, these people know the routes, they know the people, and if there is a slightly misaddressed letter, the postmaster who is a retiree probably can figure it out and get it directed to the proper place, so it makes for more efficient mail delivery in these areas.

Ms. NORTON. It does. This is not a good argument to use for you, however, because that could be made for any annuitant. They would always have a head start and head run. It is the compelling need, I think, that makes this legislation attractive.

Let me ask you the same questions I have asked all of those who have preceded you. Some of your testimony assumed that we would be into this case by case unworkable or so it seems approach. Would you support adding the Postal Service to a list of agencies covered in Title V that would get a waiver from the Postal Service of the offset provisions?

Mr. OLVERA. We definitely do not want a system that is going to be abused by hiring retirees and keeping new people from coming into the career work force. We definitely do not want that, so in my opinion it would be better if we could have this bill.

Mr. BROWN. On a case by case, I can't say that that would help the situation much because it is just like if, say, a rural letter carrier had a death in the family, I mean in the family, they would have to call OPM to get permission for somebody to run that route when they don't have any relief? I can't see a case by case. I think the bill the way that it is written is what we are looking for, it gets some kind of relief that we can depend on, and it is like we have said and you understand it, too, it is not a permanent job, it is just a relief, no benefits.

All we are trying to do, you know, is to get it offset so that it won't cost us money if I we go back and want to deliver the mail for 180 days.

Ms. NORTON. You have also heard this other idea of an advance waiver based on categories of need so that the Postal Service could, the appropriate employee could grant the waiver on the ground at the site.

Mr. OLVERA. What difference would this bill be from that?

Ms. CREGAN. That would be my question.

Ms. NORTON. The difference—I am not an advocate for the other side, it is my obligation to put to you, the OPM, questions just as I try to put hard questions to them.

Apparently, statutory waivers are virtually unknown in the law, and the annuitant, the notion of not granting waivers has been very strict, and you heard them testify, they don't want to encourage anybody to come forward to ask for it.

We did a buyout legislation; we could hardly get the thing out of here because they said you can't come back for so long, you will be dead by the time you come back and the emergency will be so great, so you are going to find in the Congress the notion that you are going to have to respond to it and we are going to have to respond to if we go forward and advocate this bill.

And it is the old argument that you might expect to hear, the floodgate argument, that here is the first one whose nose is under

the tent, and now others will look at the arguments you made, tailor their needs to your arguments, here they come, then they said, well, you did it for the rural postal workers, then they say, see, Norton, you should have told your old friend Tom that postal workers were like anyone else.

I am trying to make sure if we go forward that we have an airtight answer to that, and so the notion—we also have the half million dollar problem. Tom is absolutely right, that we are stretching a bit; this is a reach to say that this is like your normal pay-go problem.

Nevertheless, apparently the CBO is on our neck here. We can't do anything with CBO if they say, so I disagree with them all the time, but once—and again, to show you how serious they can be, they did almost succeed in keeping us from getting buyout legislation which would have produced far more irrational results than even you have marketed here.

So what we are going to find is that we have got to get over that hump, over the pay-go hump, and if we don't or if for some other reason we can't go forward, at least we have to understand whether there is any relief out there for rural areas anyhow, anywhere.

I am not seeking here a substitute, but I am simply exploring all the possibilities, and that is why I asked you about the advance waiver which would give your permission to do on the ground what is needed at the moment.

Mr. OLVERA. A question on the advanced waiver, would it have time limits? Would it have time limits? Apparently waivers now don't have time limits. We would definitely be against a no time limit because we would want to get people, permanent people in these slots, so it is counter to our proposal of immediate emergency need.

Mr. SAWYER. Madam Chairman?

Ms. NORTON. Yes.

Mr. SAWYER. The real dilemma, it seems to me, is grounded in the notion that the people that we are talking about have one foot planted in the retirement system and subject to all of the restraints that apply to all other Federal employees. Their other foot planted in a system that is a quasi-independent agency that operates under very different kinds of rules and very different kinds of requirements in a very different setting, and they are being torn between these two sets of requirements. Both of which have legitimacy in their own right but leave them without a very solid place to stand.

It seems to me, that we ought to be able to find a way to move them on a unique base into another measure of what is an appropriate waiver from the annuity limitation based on the independence of their work. They are not returning to a traditional Federal employee circumstance as would be Defense Department or any other agency. They are moving into this quasi-independent agency situation. For that reason, it seems to me that the concern that OPM expresses about creating a floodgate for all of these other agencies is really not as well-founded as it might seem in the first place.

Their standing as retirees in the same system may be under the same set of laws. However, what they are going into is much more

like the private sector setting. We would no more limit the annuities of Federal retirees based on their going to work down at the corner grocery store than it seems to me we ought to limit these people based on the very special circumstances of the kind of employment and the place of employment they are going to. It is in that sense almost unique, perhaps the word unique is appropriate.

Ms. NORTON. We might look for other ways by analogy by which the Postal Service is indeed freed up from rules and laws that apply to—that would be useful, I would say to staff, to find or to list those ways to make, because I think that would help, A, the argument that Congressman Sawyer is making if we are in fact treating postal employees systematically enough as if they were private employees than if we follow, you can't catch as catch can, that you ought to do it or not do it or if you are in fact holding them to the requirements of other Federal employees, you ought to have a compelling reason for doing so.

Do you have any more questions?

Mr. SAWYER. I really just want to thank you very much for your understanding and latitude in trying to deal with this issue, and particularly for having this hearing. You had a very, very busy time with this subcommittee and with the work that you have been doing more broadly in terms of Federal employees and your willingness to take this up at this time has been very helpful, and I appreciate it.

Ms. NORTON. Well, I appreciate that Congressman Sawyer has brought this to the attention of the subcommittee, because I think he has discovered a real problem that was not being addressed and apparently had become a problem that is very serious, so I think that the kudos really belong to Mr. Sawyer, and I assure you, my friends whom I have worked with in the past who are sitting before me now, that we will give every consideration to this bill, and I very much thank you for appearing and for what has been very useful testimony for this subcommittee.

[Whereupon, at 4 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

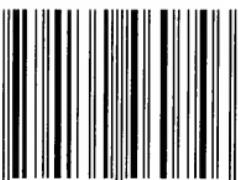


BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 05706 7140

ISBN 0-16-046074-3



9 780160 460746